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THE

WORKS

OF

NATHANAEL EMMONS, D. D.

LATE

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN FRANKLIN, MASS.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

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PART XIII.

WORK OF CHRIST.

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SERMON XLIV.

NECESSITY OF THE ATONEMENT.

THAT he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. ROMANS, iii. 26.

THE atonement of Christ lies at the foundation of the gospel, which we cannot understand, without understanding the nature and necessity of the atonement which he made on the cross. But there are various opinions maintained upon this important subject, by those who profess to believe the gospel. It becomes us, therefore, to examine this subject seriously and critically, that we may discover wherein his atonement consists, and for what purpose it was made. The apostle, having proved in the preceding verses that all mankind are by nature in a state of guilt and condemnation, proceeds to show how believers are forgiven, or justified, through the redemption, or atonement, of Christ. Speaking of himself and other believers, he says, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins — that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." According to this representation, it was absolutely necessary for Christ to make atonement for sin by his blood, on the cross, in order that God might be just, in forgiving or justifying penitent believers. Though it was not necessary that God should forgive the transgressors of his law, yet it was necessary that an atonement should be made to show that he was just to himself, as well as merciful to them, if he did grant them the remission of sins. So that we may safely conclude,

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That the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account.

It is proposed to show that this was so, and why it was so.

I. It is to be shown that the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account.

If the atonement of Christ were not necessary on the account of sinners, then, if it were necessary at all, it must have been necessary on God's account. But it is easy to see that it could not be necessary on the account of sinners. When Adam had sinned, and involved himself and his posterity in guilt and ruin, God might have destroyed him and them, as he destroyed the fallen angels, according to the rules of strict justice. By treating them in such a manner, he would have done honor to his character, to his law and to his government, in the eyes of all his intelligent creatures, without doing the least injury to them. As sinners, they deserved to suffer the penalty of the law which they had broken; and God might have inflicted upon them that eternal death which is the proper wages of sin. On the other hand, he might have saved them in a sovereign manner, without doing injustice to them, or to any other of his creatures. If God had chosen to save all mankind without an atonement, he would have treated them better than they deserved, which could have been no injury to them; nor could it have been any injury to the fallen angels, to have treated fallen men better than he treated them. As he treated them as well as they deserved, they could have no ground to complain, if he treated mankind better than they deserved. There was, therefore, no necessity for the atonement of Christ on the account of sinners. If no atonement had been made, God might have treated them according to their deserts, or better than their deserts, without doing them, or any other creature, the least injury. When Adam fled from the presence of God in despair, it was not because he feared that his Creator and Lawgiver would injure him. He knew that God would not injure him, if he destroyed him, and much less, if he saved him. All sinners now know the same. When they reflect upon their sinful, perishing state, they are sensible that they deserve to die, and that eternal death is not a punishment greater than their guilt. They see nothing, on their own account, why God may not exercise his justice or his grace towards them, without an atonement. They know that he would not injure them, if he should exercise either his justice or his grace towards them. Consequently, they see no need of an atonement on their own account. If no atonement had been made, God might have determined to destroy all the human race, or to have saved all the human race, without doing any injury to them, or to any other created beings. It hence appears that there was no necessity for the atonement of

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Christ, on account of sinners themselves. But the apostle assures us in the text, that an atonement was necessary on God's account, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

II. I proceed to show why the atonement of Christ was necessary on God's account, in order to render it consistent with his amiable and glorious character to extend pardoning mercy to this fallen, guilty, perishing world.

If we can only discover why Adam, after he had eaten the forbidden fruit and incurred the penalty of the divine law, despaired of pardoning mercy, we can easily see why an atonement for sin was absolutely necessary, in order to render it consistent for God to exercise pardoning grace to sinners. Adam knew that God was perfectly good, and that his perfect goodness would necessarily dispose him to do good, not only to the innocent, but to the guilty. Why then did he despair of mercy? The only reason was, that he knew that God was just, as well as good; and that it was morally impossible that he should exercise his goodness inconsistently with his justice. This banished from his mind every gleam of hope. The more he realized the goodness of God, the more he realized the justice of God; and the more he realized the justice of God, the more he despaired of pardoning mercy. For he could not see how it was possible that God should be just to himself and to his law, and yet pardon his transgression; nor was there an angel in heaven who could see how this could be brought about. A servant who has disobeyed a good master, is more afraid of being punished than a servant who has disobeyed a bad master. A child who has disobeyed a good parent, is more afraid of being punished than a child who has disobeyed a bad parent. The reason is the same in both cases. The servant and the child know that goodness implies justice; and justice is a disposition to punish. Adam knew that the perfect goodness of God implied his perfect justice; and that his perfect justice implied an inflexible disposition to punish the guilty. It is not probable that Adam thought of an atonement; and if he did, he could not see how an atonement could be made; and therefore he utterly despaired of pardon and salvation. As Adam could not see how God could consistently forgive him without an atonement, so none of his posterity can see how God can consistently forgive them without an atonement. He was a true representative of all who should be and now are in his state of guilt and condemnation. As God could not have been just to himself in forgiving Adam without an atonement, so he cannot be just to himself in forgiving any of his guilty posterity without an atonement. And as God did determine to show mercy to sin-

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ners, so it was absolutely necessary that Christ should make an atonement for their sins. The atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account. The necessity of Christ's atonement, in case God determined to save sinners, originated entirely in his immutable justice. He must be just to himself; that is, he must display his essential and amiable attribute of retributive justice, in pardoning or justifying those who deserve to be punished. There was nothing in men that required an atonement, and there was nothing in God that required an atonement, but his justice. All the moral perfections of the Deity are comprised in the pure love of benevolence. God is love. Before the foundation of the world, there was no ground for considering love as divided into various and distinct attributes. But after the creation, new relations arose; and in consequence of new relations, more obligations were formed, both on the side of the Creator and on that of his creatures. Before created beings existed, God's love was exercised wholly towards himself. But after moral beings were brought into existence, it was right in the nature of things that he should exercise right affections towards them, according to their moral characters. Hence the goodness, the justice, and mercy of God are founded in the nature of things. That is, so long as God remains the Creator, and men remain his creatures, he is morally obliged to exercise these different and distinct feelings towards them. He must be disposed to do good to the innocent, to punish the guilty, and at the same time, to forgive them. Now there never was any difficulty in the way of God's doing good to the innocent, nor in the way of his punishing the guilty; but there was a difficulty in sparing and forgiving the wicked. God's goodness is a disposition to do good to the innocent; his justice is a disposition to punish the guilty; and his mercy is a disposition to pardon and save the guilty. The great difficulty, therefore, in the way of man's salvation, was, to reconcile God's disposition to punish with his disposition to forgive; or in other words, to reconcile his justice with his mercy. This was a difficulty in the divine character, and a still greater difficulty in the divine government. For God had revealed his justice in his moral government. He had given a law to man, and in that law had clearly exhibited his justice. In the penalty of the law he had declared that the transgressor deserved eternal punishment; that he had a right to inflict eternal punishment; that he had power to inflict eternal punishment; and that he had a disposition to inflict eternal punishment. There was a clear and full exhibition of retributive justice, in the first law given to man. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This law, clothed with all the

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authority of God, man violated, and exposed himself to the awful penalty. And in consequence of this single act of disobedience, his posterity became involved in the same state of wretchedness and guilt. What now could be done? It is easy to see that justice might be done without the least difficulty; for this had been done in a similar case. The fallen angels had been doomed to hopeless ruin, for their first offence. But how could pardoning grace be displayed? This none of the intelligent creation could tell. The angels of light could not tell; for they had seen those who kept not their first estate, excluded from heaven, and the door of mercy for ever shut against them. Man could not tell. He knew that the sentence of death was passed upon him, which might be justly and immediately executed. How then could grace be displayed consistently with justice? This question God alone was able to solve. He knew that he could be just to himself, if his justice were displayed by the sufferings of a proper substitute in the room of sinners. He knew that the sufferings of a substitute in the room of sinners, would both display his justice, and support the honor of his law and government. And as he saw that such a substitute was necessary, he appointed Christ to take the place of sinners, and to suffer and die the just for the unjust. Christ was the Son of his love, the second person in the sacred Trinity, and equal with himself in every divine perfection. He was the only substitute to be found in the universe, who was competent to the great work of making a complete atonement for sin. Him therefore the Father set forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins. And though he was once "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," that he might taste death for every man. "For it became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It was indispensably necessary that Christ should suffer, when he took the place of sinners to make atonement for their sins. For suffering is the penalty which God threatens to inflict upon transgressors of his law, to display his vindictive justice. It was only by causing Christ to suffer in the room of sinners, that God could display his vindictive justice towards them. Accordingly we read, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief;" and that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his

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stripes we are healed." By inflicting such sufferings upon Christ, when he took the place of a substitute in the room of sinners, God as clearly displayed his hatred of sin and his inflexible disposition to punish it, as if he had made all mankind personally miserable for ever.

It is agreeable to the common opinion and practice of mankind in war, to hold prisoners as hostages; so that in case the enemy violate the law of arms, by abusing or putting to death the captives taken, they may justly retaliate, by treating the hostages as the abused captives were treated. So General Washington proposed to act, when a British officer, contrary to the law of nations, killed Captain Huddy, an American officer, after he had surrendered. He determined to put Captain Asgill, a British officer whom he had in his hands, to death, in the room of the man who killed Captain Huddy. And had he actually done this, he would have displayed his just displeasure against the murderer and all who justified and protected him. Or in other words, he would have done justice to himself, by making it appear that he meant to maintain the dignity of his character as a commander-in-chief, and to support his authority in punishing all who should dare to violate the law of arms. He would not, indeed, have done distributive justice to the murderer, nor have prevented his being put to death, if he could have been found and apprehended.

Just so, God, by subjecting the Son of his love to death in the room of sinners, could display his immutable disposition to punish sin, in the most striking and awful manner. Accordingly, when Christ actually took the place of sinners, and poured out his soul unto death on the cross, his sufferings in their room as clearly displayed the vindictive justice of God to angels and men, and the whole intelligent creation, as if he had made them all personally miserable for ever. By subjecting Christ to sufferings and death on the cross, God has done justice to himself, and made a complete atonement for sin. He, not Christ, made the atonement. He bruised him, and put him to grief; his sword pierced his heart, and shed his blood on the cross. So the prophet predicted: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." This prediction Christ applied to himself just after he had instituted a standing memorial of his death, and just before his sufferings began in the garden. "Then saith Jesus unto his disciples, all ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Christ knew that it was absolutely necessary that the Father should put him to death, in order to display his justice in the forgiveness or remission of sins. And

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it was on this ground solely, that he cordially submitted to die on the cross. This he expressly declared before he suffered: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." It was the Father that made atonement for sin, by putting Christ to death on the cross by his own hand. By making his own Son a substitute for sinners, and putting him to death in their room, he declared his righteousness to the whole universe, so that he can now "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This was the great and important end to be answered by an atonement. And in order to answer this end, Christ's atonement was absolutely necessary.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account, that he might be just in exercising pardoning mercy to penitent and believing sinners, then it was universal, and sufficient for the pardon and salvation of the non-elect, as well as for the pardon and salvation of the elect. Some believe and maintain the doctrine of a limited atonement. They suppose that Christ died to make atonement for the elect, exclusively of the non-elect. This opinion appears to be founded on a wrong notion of the nature and design of the atonement. It was designed to maintain and display the justice of God in the remission of sins. And if it has rendered it consistent with the justice of God to exercise pardoning mercy to one sinner, it has rendered it equally consistent with his justice to exercise pardoning mercy to all sinners. The atonement of Christ has the same favorable aspect upon the non-elect as upon the elect. It opens as wide a door of mercy to the one as to the other. It removes all natural obstacles out of the way of the salvation of either, because it renders it consistent with the justice of God to pardon and save a part, or the whole of mankind, according to his sovereign pleasure and eternal purpose. The atonement of Christ has laid God under no obligation to save one of mankind, but left him at full liberty to save a part, or the whole of the human race. It is generally allowed that God does in the gospel offer salvation to all; but how can he consistently offer salvation to all, if Christ has not made atonement for all? If Christ has not made atonement for the non-elect, it is no more consistent for God to offer salvation to the non-elect, than to offer salvation to the fallen angels, for whom, all will allow, he has made no atonement. Besides, the scripture not only represents God as inviting all men to accept of pardon and salvation through the blood of Christ, but represents him

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as threatening to punish all eternally, who refuse to accept the offers of pardon in Christ's name. This looks perfectly inconsistent with the retributive justice of God, unless the atonement be universal. What can be more unjust than to punish sinners for not accepting a salvation which was never provided for them? And it never was provided for them, if Christ did not, by his sufferings and death, make atonement for them. But Christ commands his ministers to say to all, without exception, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." This, as well as many other passages of scripture, clearly proves that the atonement of Christ is not limited, but extends to all the children of men. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." And the apostle John says, "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

2. If the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account, to satisfy his justice towards himself in exercising pardoning mercy to the guilty, then it did not satisfy justice towards sinners themselves. Justice, as it respects them, stands in full force against them. Nothing which Christ did or suffered, altered their characters, obligations, or deserts. His obedience did not free them from their obligation to obey the divine law, nor did his sufferings free them from their desert of suffering the penalty of the divine law. Both the precept and penalty of the divine law are founded in the nature of things; and Christ did not come to destroy these, nor could he destroy them, by obedience or sufferings. The atonement which Christ has made, has left sinners in the same state that they were in before. Its whole efficacy respects God's character. It has completely satisfied his justice in exercising mercy to all penitent, believing sinners. This is what the assembly of divines evidently mean in reply to the question, "How does Christ execute the office of a priest?" They answer, "By his once offering up himself a sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice." This was all that he meant to do, or could do, or that needed to be done, in order to make a complete atonement for sin. But many suppose that Christ, by his obedience and death, did a great deal more for sinners, than for God. They suppose that he suffered in the room of the elect, and bore the penalty of the law in their stead, so that he paid the full debt of suffering which they owed to God. And on this account, they suppose that God cannot in justice punish them for any of their past, present, or future sins. They likewise suppose that Christ obeyed the law perfectly in their room, and by his perfect obedience paid the full debt of obedience which they owed to God; so that they are no longer bound to obey the precepts, nor

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exposed to suffer the penalty of the law. Hence they suppose that there are no terms or conditions of salvation to be performed, in order to pardon and justification. Christ has done all in their stead, and they have nothing to do but to believe that he has done all, and that they are completely safe. This is true Antinomianism, which is believed and propagated at this day by various sectarians. But all these notions are groundless and absurd, if the atonement was necessary entirely on God's account, and not on the account of sinners; and if all that Christ did and suffered, he did and suffered to render it consistent with the justice of God to forgive and save penitent believers.

3. If the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth, then he did not merit any thing at the hand of God for himself, or for mankind. There is no phrase more common and familiar than that of *the merits of Christ;* but it is generally misunderstood and misapplied. Though Christ suffered the just for the unjust, though he made his soul an offering for sin, and though he suffered most excruciating pains in the garden and on the cross, yet he did not lay God under the least obligation, in point of justice, to pardon and save a single sinner. His sufferings could not lay God under any obligations to do any thing for him, and much less for any of the human race. God is above being bound by any being in the universe; and he cannot bind himself, otherwise than by a free, voluntary, gratuitous promise. Though God promises to pardon every true believer, yet he promises to do it as an act of grace, and not as an act of justice. For the atonement of Christ did not lay him under the least obligation, in point of justice, to pardon even true penitents. Accordingly, the apostle says that believers are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And as Christ did not merit pardon for believers by his sufferings, so he did not merit a reward for them by his obedience. It is true, God has promised to reward him for his obedience unto death, but his promise is a promise of grace, and not of justice. So he has promised to reward every man for the least good he does, even for giving a cup of cold water in sincerity. But though he promises to reward all good men according to their works, or for their works, yet his promise to them is a promise of grace, not of justice, and without the least regard to Christ's obedience as the ground of it. The truth is, Christ never merited any thing at the hand of God, for himself, or for sinners, by his obedience and sufferings. By obeying and suffering in the room of sinners, he only rendered it consistent for God to renew or not to renew, to pardon or not to pardon, to reward or not to reward, sinners; but did not lay him under

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the least obligation, in point of justice, to do either of these things for them. There was no merit in Christ's obedience and sufferings; and there is no propriety in using the term, merits of Christ. The use of this phraseology has led multitudes into gross and dangerous errors, in respect to faith in Christ, justification through his atonement, and the future rewards of the righteous. It is of great importance, therefore, to form clear and just ideas of Christ's atonement, in order to avoid those errors.

4. If the sole design of Christ's atonement was to satisfy the justice of God towards himself, then he exercises the same free grace in pardoning sinners through the atonement, as if no atonement had been made. It has been considered as a great difficulty to reconcile free pardon with full satisfaction to divine justice. The difficulty has arisen from a supposition that the atonement of Christ was designed to pay the debt of sufferings which sinners owed to God. If this were the design of the atonement, it would be difficult to see the grace of God in pardoning sinners on that account. For there is no grace in forgiving a debtor after his debt is paid, whether by himself or by another. But sin is not a debt, and cannot be paid by suffering. Christ's suffering in the room of sinners did not alter the nature of their sin, nor take away their just deserts of punishment. There is the same grace of God in forgiving them through the atonement, as if no atonement had been made. This the apostle asserts. He says, God justifies, that is, pardons believers freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. The atonement of Christ rendered it just for God to exercise his grace in pardoning believers, though it did not remove their guilt and ill desert in the least degree. None will deny that it was grace in God to send Christ into the world to make atonement for sin, or that it was grace in Christ to come into the world and suffer and die to make atonement for sin; and it is certain that the atonement he made did not lay God under obligation, in point of justice, to pardon sinners on account of his atonement; it therefore plainly follows, that God exercises as real grace in pardoning sinners through the atonement of Christ, as in sending him to make atonement. Free pardon, therefore, is perfectly consistent with free grace.

5. If the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account, then it is absurd to suppose that it was merely expedient. The Socinians deny that Christ died as a vicarious sacrifice, to make any atonement for sin. They say that God is bound to forgive sinners upon the ground of repentance only, and that he does actually forgive them on that ground. But there are many Trinitarians, who believe that Christ did make

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atonement for sin, who yet suppose that his atonement was not absolutely necessary, but only expedient. They suppose that God might have pardoned and saved sinners without any atonement, if he had pleased; and that he pleased to pardon and save sinners through an atonement, merely because it was the most expedient or best way of saving them, but not because it was the only possible way. It is granted that there was no more necessity of God's saving sinners at all, than there was of giving them existence; and certainly there was no necessity of giving them existence. For his own pleasure they are and were created. But after he had given them existence, and they had become sinners, it was morally impossible that he should pardon and save them without an atonement. It did not depend upon his mere pleasure, whether he should save them with or without an atonement. On the supposition that he determined to save them, an atonement was as necessary as his own immutable justice. There was no other possible way of saving them. And so Christ himself supposed: for he said to God in the prospect of his sufferings, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." There is no reason to think that God would have subjected the Son of his love to all the pains and reproaches of the cross, to make atonement for sin, if he could have forgiven it without such an infinitely costly atonement. It is easy to see that if the atonement of Christ was founded on the immutable justice of God, it was as necessary as his immutable justice.

6. If the atonement of Christ was necessary entirely on God's account, then we may safely conclude that it consisted in his sufferings, and not in his obedience. His obedience had no tendency to display divine justice, which was the only end to be answered by his atonement. His obedience was necessary on his account, to qualify him for making atonement for the disobedient; but his sufferings were necessary on God's account, to display his justice. Accordingly we find all the predictions and types of Christ, under the Old Testament, represent him as a suffering Saviour. And in the New Testament he is represented as making atonement by his blood, by his sufferings, and by his death. It was by his once offering up himself a sacrifice to divine justice, that he made a complete atonement for sin.

7. It appears from the nature of Christ's atonement, that God can consistently pardon any penitent, believing sinners on that account. By putting Christ to death on the cross, by his own hand, he has declared his righteousness to the whole universe in the remission of sins. He can now be just, and be the justifier of every one that believeth. He can now as consistently pardon one penitent sinner as another; and he is

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as willing to pardon one penitent as another. He now commands all men every where to repent, and assures them that if they do repent and believe, they shall be saved, through the redemption that is in Christ. When the eyes of sinners are opened to see the native corruption of their hearts and the sinfulness of their lives, they are ready to think and say that they are too guilty and ill deserving to find mercy in the sight of God. But such views and feelings are totally groundless and sinful. God invites and requires all sinners, without distinction, to accept of pardoning mercy. He is as ready to show mercy to the Gentile, as to the Jew; to the greatest as to the smallest sinner; to the oldest as to the youngest sinner; upon the terms of the gospel. Paul, though the chief of sinners, found mercy. Christ says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And again he says, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me; and whosoever cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." But,

8. None can come to Christ and accept of pardoning mercy on account of his atonement, without accepting the punishment of their iniquities. The great design of the atonement is to show that God would be just in inflicting eternal punishment upon the transgressors of his holy and righteous law. Sinners can see no beauty nor excellence in the character and conduct of Christ, in condemning sin in the flesh by his sufferings and death on the cross, until they have learned of the Father their just desert of the penalty of the law, and cordially approve of it. Then they will see that there is no other possible way of obtaining pardoning mercy, than through the atonement of Christ. They will see that they must completely renounce all self dependence, and self righteousness, and rely alone upon the atonement of Christ as the ground of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. Though Paul once thought, in respect to obedience to the law, that he was blameless, and stood high in the divine favor; yet as soon as he became acquainted with the justice, spirituality, and extent of its precepts and penalty, all the hopes he had built upon the law, died, and left him in despair. So that he was constrained to say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Christ told sinners that "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." No other foundation of pardon can any man lay, than that which God has laid in the atonement of Christ. Sinners must trust in him alone for forgiveness; for it is only for the sake of Christ, that God can forgive iniquity, transgressions, and sin, and save the guilty from the wrath to come. But God is now ready to forgive all who feel the spirit, and speak the language of the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

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SERMON XLV.

THE PURCHASE OF CHRIST'S BLOOD.

To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.
Acts, xx. 28.

Paul, in his return from Asia to Judea, came to Miletus, and sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church, to whom he related how he had preached and conducted, while he resided among them. And before he takes his leave of them, he gives them the solemn exhortation in the text: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." He added this last clause to enforce the obligation of the elders to be faithful in feeding those whom Christ, as God, had purchased with his atoning blood, or for whom he had made complete atonement for sin, by his sufferings and death on the cross. What I propose in the present discourse is, to consider,

I. What the scripture says concerning Christ's purchasing salvation for us.

II. What he actually did to purchase salvation for us.

III. In what sense he purchased salvation for us.

I. Let us consider what the scripture says in respect to Christ's purchasing salvation for us. The inspired writers often speak upon this subject in language very similar to the phraseology in the text. Christ said to his disciples, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life *a ransom* for many." Paul said to Timothy, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." Paul said to

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the Corinthians, "Ye are bought with a price." Christ is represented as *redeeming* men, and they are said to be redeemed by him. Paul said to the Galatians, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." He said to the Ephesians, "In whom," that is, Christ, "we have redemption through his blood." He called the inheritance to which believers are entitled, a "*purchased possession.*" And John said that he heard the voice of them who actually enjoyed this purchased possession in heaven, "and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand who were redeemed from the earth." Thus it appears from the representations of scripture, that by Christ's purchasing salvation for us, we are to understand his ransoming, redeeming, or buying us with the price of his precious blood. Let us next consider,

II. What Christ actually did, to purchase, to buy, to ransom, and to redeem mankind. Upon this point, the inspired writers give us very full and particular information. It appears that Christ became incarnate, before he did any thing, properly speaking, to purchase salvation for us. He was born perfectly holy, and continued perfectly holy and innocent from his birth to his death. This he manifested by perfect obedience to all the laws to which he was subject.

In the first place, he obeyed the moral law, which he was under as man. Accordingly we read, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." The law required Christ to love his heavenly and human father, and all his brethren of mankind. This law we know he perfectly obeyed, by loving God supremely, by loving and obeying his parents, by obeying all in civil authority, and by loving and seeking the good of the whole human race.

In the next place, he obeyed all the laws of his nation. As a Jew, he was under the Mosaic dispensation, and was bound to obey all the moral, civil and ceremonial laws, which God had given to his people Israel. And it appears from the history of his life, that he did punctually and universally obey them. He read the Bible, he prayed in secret, he prayed in private with his disciples, he kept the Sabbath, he attended public worship, and annually celebrated the Passover, from twelve years old to the night before his death.

In the last place, he perfectly obeyed the mediatorial law which his Father gave him personally. He knew his Father's design in sending him into the world, and the work which he had given him to do, in order to accomplish his great and gracious design. From his childhood, he went about his

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Father's business, and obeyed his Father's will, and not his own. In obedience to the mediatorial law, when he was about thirty years of age, he submitted to the rite of baptism, by which he was inaugurated into his priestly office, and prepared for his public ministry. From that time, he went about all Judea, preaching the gospel and working miracles, until in obedience to his Father's particular command, he laid down his life on the cross.

Thus Christ was perfectly obedient, from the beginning to the end of his life, and persevered in obedience amidst the severest conflicts, trials and sufferings. He suffered extreme poverty, and had not where to lay his head. He was despised and rejected of men. He was tempted and buffeted by Satan. He was called a friend of publicans and sinners, and was said to act in concert with the devil. And from the time he had celebrated the last Passover, to the moment of his death, he suffered all the neglect, perfidy, reproach, injustice and cruelty, that the malice and power of man could inflict. He was betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his disciples, denied by Peter, abused by the chief priest, derided by the populace, mocked by Herod, and finally condemned by Pilate to be crucified between two malefactors, as an infamous blasphemer. We are now prepared to consider,

III. In what sense Christ purchased salvation for us, by what he did and suffered.

Divines have preached and written a great deal, concerning Christ's purchasing salvation for us, by what he did and suffered. Some have maintained that he purchased salvation for all mankind. Some have supposed that he purchased salvation for the church, or the elect only. Some have taught that he purchased salvation in a literal sense; but others have supposed that he did not purchase or buy salvation for any. President Edwards, in his History of Redemption, occupies fifty pages in illustrating what he calls the *purchase* of redemption. And among other things, he says, "Christ purchased our redemption both by his satisfaction, and his merit. The price Christ lays down, pays our debt, and so satisfies; by its intrinsic value, and by the agreement between the Father and the Son, it procures our title to happiness, and so merits. The satisfaction of Christ is to free us from misery, and the merit of Christ is to purchase happiness for us;" that is, as he expressly and repeatedly declares, for the *elect only*. This diversity of opinion upon the same subject, makes it a matter of importance to inquire critically and impartially, in what sense Christ did not, and in what sense he did purchase salvation for us. The strict literal meaning of the word purchase, is as well understood as

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any English word in common use; but the main question before us is to ascertain in what sense the word purchase in the text is to be understood, whether literally or figuratively. Here I would observe,

1. That Christ did not purchase salvation for us in a literal sense. He did not pay our debt of punishment, nor our debt of obedience. Though he suffered in our stead, yet he did not suffer the punishment which we deserve, and which the law threatens to us. He never transgressed the law, and so the law could not threaten any punishment to him. His sufferings were no punishment, and much less our punishment. His sufferings were by no means equal, in degree or duration, to the eternal sufferings that we deserve, and which God has threatened to inflict upon us. So that he did in no sense bear the penalty of the law, which we have broken and justly deserve. But supposing he had suffered the very same things, in degree and duration, that the law threatens to us, yet his sufferings could not pay the debt of punishment which we owe to divine justice. For his sufferings cannot take away our desert of sufferings; and if they cannot take away our desert of suffering, they cannot dissolve our obligation to suffer, nor pay our debt of suffering. We deserve to suffer as much as if Christ had not suffered at all. This we all know is agreeable to truth. Notwithstanding all the scripture says concerning Christ's suffering in our stead, and purchasing salvation for us, we still feel that we deserve to suffer the penalty of the law, which we have broken in our own persons, whether we shall suffer it or not. The debt of suffering is not like a pecuniary debt, which one man may pay for another, and dissolve his obligation to pay it. The price or ransom which Christ paid for our redemption has not diminished our ill desert, nor dissolved our obligation to suffer the due reward of our sins. We are not bound by commutative justice, which respects nothing but property, but we are bound by distributive justice, which consists in rewarding virtue, and punishing sin. Distributive justice towards a transgressor cannot be satisfied by a *mulct* or fine, but only by personal punishment. Nothing, therefore, that Christ did or suffered here on earth can satisfy God's distributive justice, or pay the debt of suffering which we owe to him. Christ did not literally purchase, or buy, or ransom, or redeem, mankind from the punishment which they deserved, and which God had in his law threatened to inflict upon them. None of these expressions are to be understood in any other than a figurative sense, in respect to Christ's atonement. His sufferings and death did not literally pay the debt of punishment which we owe to divine justice. Nor did his obedience

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pay the debt of obedience which we are bound to pay to the divine law. Though Christ was obedient to all the divine commands, through the whole course of his life, and even in his death, yet he obeyed only for himself, and not in the room of mankind, in order to free them from their obligation to obey God personally and perfectly. There was indeed no occasion for his obeying in our room, in order to *merit* salvation for us. Though God cannot forgive sin without an atonement, yet he can reward sincere obedience without an atonement. After God has pardoned penitent believers, through the atonement of Christ, he can accept and reward them for their cordial obedience, without any atonement. Besides, it was absolutely impossible that Christ should literally merit any thing from the hands of his Father. For in order to merit salvation or eternal life for sinners, he must bring his Father under obligation, in point of justice, to bestow eternal life upon them. But it is impossible for one divine person to bring another divine person under obligation, while both are absolutely independent. One created being can lay another created being under obligation, because one created being may be dependent upon another; but since God the Father is absolutely independent, it is utterly impossible that God the Son should bring him under obligation, in point of justice. It is, therefore, contrary to sound reason to suppose that Christ ever merited any thing at the hands of God, either by his sufferings, or obedience. Hence we are not to understand, by Christ's purchasing salvation for us, that he literally paid either the debt of suffering, or the debt of obedience, which we owed to God. For his death could not merit our deliverance from future punishment, nor his obedience merit eternal life for us. But,

2. By Christ's purchasing salvation for us, or buying, ransoming and redeeming us, we are to understand that he made a proper atonement for sin, which rendered it consistent for God to offer salvation to all mankind, and to bestow it upon all penitent, believing, returning sinners. This he did, not by his obedience or righteousness, but by his blood, or his sufferings and death on the cross. He was personally bound to obey the moral, ceremonial and mediatorial law, to make it appear to the world that he was the true Messiah, who was promised to our first parents immediately after their apostacy. His obedience made no part of his atonement; it was only a prerequisite to qualify him to make it by his death. Many make a distinction between his *active* and *passive* obedience; but there is no foundation for this distinction in scripture. His passive obedience had no more tendency to make atonement, than his active obedience. All his obedience was precisely of

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the same nature. It was an expression of love to God and man. But his expression of love to God and man had no atoning influence, nor any tendency to merit either forgiveness or eternal life for sinners. The scripture never ascribes any part of his atonement to his holy and obedient life, but to his laying down his life, giving his life a ransom, pouring out his soul unto death, and his once offering himself a sacrifice for sin. His dying the just for the unjust answered the same purpose that God would have answered by executing the penalty of the law upon transgressors themselves. It displayed the same feelings towards sinners that God would have displayed by punishing the whole human race according to their desert. By punishing them according to their desert, God would have manifested his infinite displeasure towards them, and his inflexible disposition to maintain his moral government over all moral beings. Such a display of God's hatred of sin, and disposition to punish it, was absolutely necessary, in order to render it consistent with the perfect rectitude of his nature, to pardon and save penitent sinners from deserved punishment. And nothing could more fully display his vindictive justice in the view of the whole intelligent creation, than his subjecting his Son, whom he loved with the most ardent affection, to the painful and reproachful death of the cross. Through the medium of his vicarious death, God made it manifest that he feels the same hatred of sin and disposition to punish it, when he forgives, as when he punishes sinners. Though God did not punish sinners by the stripes which he laid on Christ, yet he displayed the same feelings that he would have displayed, if he had punished them all personally. Though General Washington would not have punished the man who killed Captain Huddy, if he had put Captain Asgill to death in his room, yet he would have displayed his disposition to punish the man who killed Captain Huddy, as clearly as if he had put that murderer to death. God, by subjecting Christ to his agonies in the garden and to his sufferings on the cross, demonstrated to the world, that he would by no means clear the guilty, without an atonement for sin. And though the sufferings and death of Christ did not pay the debt of suffering which mankind owed to divine justice, nor dissolve their obligation and desert of punishment; yet Christ by his blood *procured* the pardon and salvation of the church, and laid a foundation for the pardon and salvation of all mankind, so far as an atonement for their sins could lay a foundation for God to make a full display of his pardoning mercy. It was not possible for Christ to merit eternal life for any; but he could procure salvation for all whom his Father should in his sovereign mercy, bring to

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repentance and faith, and prepare for the kingdom of heaven. It is, therefore, in this sense only, that Christ purchased, bought, ransomed or redeemed mankind, by his blood. This is what Peter believed and taught christians to believe, respecting the redemption of Christ. He says, "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot." The debt which sinners owe to God is not a pecuniary debt, and therefore cannot be paid with silver or gold. It is a debt of guilt, which the blood of Christ cannot literally pay, and discharge the original debtors from all obligation to pay. But his blood can *atone* for their guilt, and procure pardon or forgiveness at the hands of a merciful God. Now, as the forgiveness of sin, or deliverance from deserved punishment, resembles a discharge from a pecuniary debt, so there is a propriety in the sacred writers' using the terms, purchased, bought, ransomed, and redeemed, in reference to what Christ did and suffered to deliver mankind from the wrath to come. And these figurative expressions are so proper, pertinent and intelligible, that there seems to be no ground to understand them in a literal sense, which would imply the gross absurdity that Christ's obedience was our obedience, and Christ's sufferings were our sufferings; so that now our obligation to obedience and our desert of punishment are entirely taken away. But if we understand the terms purchased, bought, ransomed, and redeemed, in a figurative sense, then all that the inspired writers have told us respecting Christ's having obtained eternal redemption for us, is plain and intelligible.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that Christ did not, either by his obedience or death, merit salvation for us. Both ministers and people, who call themselves orthodox, are very fond of using the phrase, *merits of Christ*, when speaking of his atonement for sin, by which they mean that Christ merited salvation for all for whom he made atonement. But this is neither a scriptural nor proper phrase. It is often designedly or undesignedly used to convey the idea that Christ, by his obedience and sufferings on the cross, paid the debt of suffering and obedience in the room of sinners, so that God is obliged, in point of justice, to release them from eternal sufferings, and to bestow upon them eternal life. This is a false and unscriptural sentiment, and naturally tends to lead men into several other great and dangerous errors.

In particular, it leads some to believe that Christ died and

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made atonement only for the elect. For if Christ merited salvation for all for whom he died, then God is obliged, in point of justice, to save all for whom he died; and if he died for all, then he is equally bound, in point of justice, to save the whole human race. This is a just and conclusive way of arguing; and therefore many who argue in this way, justly conclude that Christ died only for the elect, because they suppose that only the elect will be saved. Those who call themselves very strict and genuine Calvinists, have long maintained that Christ died and merited salvation only for the elect. It must be allowed that they draw a just conclusion from their premises, and have good ground to maintain their darling doctrine of a limited atonement. But how they can reconcile the universal offers in the gospel of salvation to sinners with their notion of particular redemption, it is not easy to see.

Another error to which the phrase, the merits of Christ, leads, is the false notion of imputed guilt and imputed righteousness. Those who hold that Christ literally purchased, bought, ransomed and redeemed mankind by his obedience and death, suppose that his sufferings are imputed to believers for their pardon, and his obedience is imputed to them for their justification, or title to eternal life. This is the same as to suppose that Christ's sufferings and obedience are transferred to believers, and become their sufferings and obedience, which is absurd.

Nor is this all; the phrase, the merits of Christ, leads many professed Calvinists into the gross error of Antinomianism, or the doctrine of an *appropriating faith.* Many who believe that Christ merited salvation for the elect only, suppose that saving faith essentially consists in a person's believing that Christ died and merited salvation for him in particular, and that the merits of his death and obedience have been imputed to him, and have released him, in point of justice, from the wrath to come, and entitled him to eternal life.

The phrase, the merits of Christ, leads some to deny that God offers salvation to all men without distinction or limitation. As they suppose that Christ merited salvation only for the elect, so they naturally suppose that God offers salvation to none but the elect. But the plain truth of fact is, that God does offer salvation to all ages, classes and characters of men; which proves that Christ did not merit salvation any more for the elect than for the non-elect, nor indeed for any of mankind. If Christ merited salvation for the elect, then it is absurd to suppose that he offers salvation to them upon the terms of repentance and faith; or if Christ merited salvation for all men, it is absurd to suppose that he offers salvation upon any terms

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whatever; for justice requires him to save all, whether they comply or do not comply with any terms proposed in the gospel. It is not strange, therefore, that the phrase, the merits of Christ, has actually led men to imagine that all mankind will finally be saved. The scripture plainly declares that Christ did suffer and die for all mankind; and if his sufferings and death did merit salvation for all men, it necessarily follows that all men must be saved. If men would only understand, as they ought, what the scripture says concerning Christ's purchasing, buying, ransoming and redeeming mankind by his sufferings and death in a figurative, and not in a literal sense, they would clearly see that there is no foundation in scripture for the phrase, the merits of Christ, and of course that there is no foundation in scripture for the doctrine of a limited atonement, or for the doctrine of an appropriating faith, or for the doctrine of universal salvation. The phrase, the merits of Christ, which is such a fruitful source of errors and absurdities, ought to be entirely laid aside.

2. If what Christ did and suffered for sinners did not merit salvation for them, then the doctrine of justification through faith in Christ is perfectly consistent with full atonement for sin. Some imagine that the free grace of God, in converting and pardoning sinners, cannot be reconciled with the full atonement which Christ has made to divine justice, by his vicarious sufferings on the cross. But this supposed difficulty of reconciling these two doctrines arises entirely from a misapprehension of the real nature and design of Christ's atonement. The nature and design of Christ's atonement was merely to display the vindictive justice of God, and not to pay the debt of suffering which sinners had incurred by their transgressions of his holy law. Consequently, God displays the same free and sovereign grace in the conversion and salvation of sinners through the atonement of Christ, as if no atonement for sin had ever been made. So Paul thought and said in his epistle to the Romans. "Being justified freely by *his grace*, *through the redemption* that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in *his blood*, to declare *his righteousness*," or vindictive justice, "for the remission of sins — to declare, I say, at this time *his righteousness;* that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth *in Jesus*." He conveys the same sentiment in similar language in his epistle to the Ephesians. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kind-

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ness towards us, through Christ Jesus." In these passages, the apostle expressly declares that God displays his grace, even the exceeding riches of his grace, in the conversion and justification of sinners, through the blood or atonement of Christ; which amounts to saying that the free grace of God in the pardon of sin is perfectly consistent with a full atonement for it.

Since Christ's obedience was necessary to qualify him to make atonement for sin, we may see why the sacred writers sometimes represent his atonement by his obedience, and sometimes by his death, his blood, his sacrifice, or his sufferings. His obedience was inseparably connected with his death. Hence the apostle said to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Wherefore he says again, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." And by the prophet, Christ is called "the Lord our righteousness." Though the inspired writers do not always make a distinction between the obedience and sufferings of Christ, yet they let us know that this distinction is always to be understood, by their so often ascribing his atonement to his death, his blood, his sacrifice, or once offering up himself as a lamb without blemish and without spot, for all. The apostle has clearly shown that Christ made atonement for all mankind, not by his obedience, but by his blood, his suffering, his death on the cross.

4. It appears from what Christ did and suffered to make atonement for sin, that God can consistently forgive or justify all penitent believers, entirely on Christ's account; but that he cannot consistently reward them for their sincere obedience, on any other than their own account. Christ suffered and died in the room of sinners, in order to make atonement for their sins, and thereby lay a proper foundation for God to exercise pardoning mercy towards all who repent, and believe the gospel. But he did not obey in the room of sinners, in order that God might consistently reward them for their obedience, after they were pardoned or justified through the atonement of Christ. Though God cannot consistently *forgive sin*, yet he can consistently *reward virtue*, without an atonement. All the sincere obedience and good works of believers deserve the divine approbation and gracious reward, solely on account of their intrinsic and moral excellence. True holiness in saints is as

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really amiable and praise worthy, as is true holiness in angels, or as true holiness in Adam was before he sinned. God may therefore as consistently reward all true believers for their holiness on their own account, as he could have rewarded Adam for his holiness if he had never transgressed, or as he can reward angels for all their holy services in this world, on their own account, or without an atonement. There is a wide difference between rewarding goodness, and pardoning mercy. The inspired writers clearly and repeatedly point out this distinction. They expressly declare that believers are pardoned or justified by free, sovereign grace, through the redemption or atonement of Christ, and that they are rewarded according to their obedience or good works. Those who have clear and just views of the nature and necessity of Christ's atonement, can easily see the propriety and consistency of God's pardoning believers solely on Christ's account, and his rewarding them solely on their own account.

5. Since Christ has done and suffered so much to obtain eternal salvation for believers, they cannot do too much for him. He loved them before they loved him. He died for them while they were dead in trespasses and sins. He sent his Holy Spirit to convince and convert them, and to bring them out of darkness into marvellous light. What he has done and suffered to deliver them from the condemnation of the law, the power and dominion of sin, and to restore them to the forfeited favor of God, lays them under the tenderest and strongest obligation to consecrate themselves wholly to his service. Hence the apostle, speaking in the name of believers, says, "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them." Christ has much for his redeemed ones to do for him, while he is carrying on his great and gracious design in the work of redeeming love in this rebellious world. He employed saints, patriarchs and prophets, in former ages, as instruments of building up his spiritual kingdom; and in later ages he has employed apostles, preachers, and all his real friends, as instruments of promoting the great and good cause which lies nearest to his heart. These his redeemed and purchased servants ought to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of their Redeemer, knowing that their labor shall not be in vain, nor unrewarded. It is especially the duty and privilege of all the ministers of the gospel to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ, whom he hath purchased with his own blood.

Finally, let all sinners, of every age, character and condition,

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be entreated to come to Christ for salvation. He has made complete atonement for you, and removed an obstacle out of your way, which neither you nor any created being could have removed. He sincerely invites you to come to him, weary and heavy laden and self condemned, and promises to give you pardon, and peace, and rest. The kingdom of heaven is come nigh to you, and life and death are set before you. If you choose life through him who has died for you, you shall live and reign with him for ever; but if you choose death, you will never see life, but the wrath of God will abide upon you both in this world and in the world to come. You must love or hate God; you must love or hate his law; you must love or hate holiness; you must love or hate heaven; you must choose or refuse to be holy and happy for ever; and your choice must fix your eternal state.

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PART XIV.

JUSTIFICATION.

SERMONS XLVI.—XLIX.

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SERMON XLVI.

JUSTIFICATION OF BELIEVERS.

THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. — ROMANS, v. 1.

THE apostle having, in the preceding chapters, established the doctrine of justification by faith alone through the atonement of Christ, proceeds to draw a just and important inference from it in the text. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification places all, who cordially believe in Christ, in a new, a safe, and a happy situation. There is, however, no small difficulty in reconciling this with some other equally plain and important truths of the gospel. But all this difficulty, perhaps, may be entirely removed by exhibiting the doctrine of justification in a just and scriptural light. In attempting to do this, it is proposed,

I. To describe true believers.

II. To consider what is meant by their being justified.

III. To consider how they are justified.

IV. To consider when they are justified.

V. To consider the terms upon which they are justified.

I. I am to describe true believers. These are persons who have been brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace. All men are by nature morally depraved, and entirely destitute of the least degree of true love to God. They are completely under the dominion of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. They deserve nothing better from the hand of God, whom they have hated and disobeyed, than eternal death, the proper wages of

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sin. Now, all true believers have been awakened to see themselves in this guilty and perishing condition, and brought to accept the punishment of their iniquities, and to ascribe righteousness to God, should he see fit to cast them off for ever. They have been made willing to renounce all self dependence and self righteousness, and to rely alone upon the atonement of Christ for pardoning mercy in the sight of God. They have believed the record which God has given of his Son, and fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel. Christ has appeared to them precious, and their hearts have been united to him, as the branches are united to the vine. This has been owing to a divine operation upon their hearts. The apostle John represents those who have believed in the name of Christ, as "being born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." None ever become true believers, until they have been renewed in the spirit of their mind, and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. But though God has begun a good work in their hearts, yet he carries it on gradually, and never makes them perfectly holy in this life. Paul acknowledged that he had not attained to perfect holiness; but when he would do good, evil was present with him. His moral imperfections deeply affected him, and caused him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Though true believers have been reconciled to God, and God has been reconciled to them, yet they offend him every day, and every day deserve the marks of his holy displeasure.

II. We are next to consider what is meant by their justification. The apostle asserts, that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Justification is a term taken from the practice of civil courts, in acquitting or releasing from punishment those who are found innocent of the charges alleged against them. But this term is not to be understood precisely in the same sense, when applied to the justification of believers. Though God releases them from punishment, yet he does not declare them innocent. He views them as actually guilty of transgressing his holy law, and as deserving to suffer the full penalty of it; but nevertheless, for Christ's sake, he releases them from suffering the just punishment of their iniquities. So that justification, in a gospel sense, signifies no more nor less, than the pardon, or remission of sin. What is called justification, in the New Testament, is more commonly called forgiveness in the Old. Under the law,

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God is said to forgive, or pardon, true penitents; but under the gospel, he is said either to forgive, or to justify them, which signifies the same thing. Christ usually told those who repented and believed, that their sins were *forgiven*. Peter said to the three thousand that were awakened on the day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the *remission* of sins." Paul commonly used justification and forgiveness as synonymous terms. Speaking of believers, in the third of Romans, he says, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." And he addressed the Jews at Antioch, in similar terms. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the *forgiveness of sins:* And by him all that believe are *justified* from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." These and many other passages of scripture plainly teach us, that the justification of believers is the same thing as their forgiveness through the atonement of Christ.

III. We are to consider how God justifies, pardons, or forgives true believers.

The Assembly of divines say, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins," &c. But have we any evidence that he does or says any thing, when he justifies or pardons believers? Do they see any thing done, or hear any thing said, when they are justified? Or is there any reason to suppose that God puts forth any act, or makes any declaration, at the time of their justification? But if he does neither of these things, we have still to inquire, how or in what manner he justifies believers. To this question a plain and satisfactory answer may be given. God justifies all true believers by *Will*. He has formed, and written, and published his last Will and Testament concerning mankind; in which he pardons all true believers, and makes them heirs of salvation, but totally disinherits and banishes from his kingdom all the finally impenitent and unbelieving. As it is by Will that parents give future legacies to their children, while they are young, and even before they are born; so it is by Will that God gives future legacies to his children. Hence says the apostle, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." There is no occasion of God's saying or doing any thing, at the time of his justifying believers, because he has already adopted them into his family and made them heirs, according to the terms specified in his written and revealed Will.

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IV. Let us next consider when true believers are justified, pardoned and accepted. The apostle plainly intimates that they are justified as soon as they become believers. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Our Saviour said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." And again he solemnly declared, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." The apostle declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And he more directly says to believers, "You, being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven all your trespasses, blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that were against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." He farthermore asserts, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It appears from these passages of scripture, that as soon as any persons arise from spiritual death to spiritual life, or as soon as they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; or, in a word, as soon as they exercise any gracious affection, they become the children of God; and as soon as they become the children of God, they become heirs, and are instantly justified, pardoned and accepted, whether they know it or not. Children may be heirs to great estates, while they are entirely ignorant of their heirship. And so the children of God may be heirs to a rich and eternal inheritance, while they have painful fears of being for ever disinherited. Justification is instantaneous, and takes place at the moment in which sinners become saints, or have the character of heirs in God's revealed Will.

It now remains,

V. To consider the conditions upon which believers are completely justified, pardoned and accepted. I use all these expressions, because they are all used in scripture to signify the same thing. Though believers are justified, pardoned and accepted, as soon as they believe, or become the children of God, yet, if we look into his last Will and Testament, we find that their full and final pardon, or title to their eternal inheritance, is conditional. They must perform certain things, which he has specified as terms or conditions of their taking possession of their several legacies. When a man makes a Will, he may bequeath certain

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legacies to his children upon certain terms or provisos. He may give a legacy to one child upon condition that he lives to become of age; to another, upon condition that he conducts in a certain manner; to another, upon condition that he follows a certain profession; and to another, upon condition that he performs certain services. The testator always has a right to make just such provisos or conditions in his Will as he thinks proper; and those to whom he makes devises must comply with his conditions, in order to become fully and finally entitled to them. God might have justly disinherited all mankind upon their first apostacy; but in mere mercy he has given large legacies to all true believers, who will comply with the conditions which he has proposed in his new Testament. Let us now examine that sacred and precious instrument, and see what terms he has therein specified, in respect to the full and final salvation of believers.

And here we find, in the first place, that God requires believers to *persevere* in faith and obedience, in order to obtain their promised inheritance. They must continue to love, to repent, to believe, to submit, to obey, and to perform the various duties which he has enjoined upon them in his revealed Will. Christ repeatedly said to his disciples, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And he much oftener promised salvation to those only who shall faithfully fulfil their duty, and finally overcome all enemies and obstacles in the path to heaven. "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it." "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name before my Father, and before his angels." "To him that overcometh I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Paul said to the believing Jew, "Behold the goodness and severity of God; on them that fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off." He said to the Colossians, "You, that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled, in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard." Many other similar passages might be mentioned; but these are sufficient to show that true believers must overcome the world,

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endure unto the end, and finally persevere in faith and holiness, in order to take possession of the inheritance of the saints in light.

But, secondly, lest true believers should make shipwreck of their faith, and finally fall away, God has made a proviso in his revealed Will, which effectually secures their love, their faith, and their obedience, to the end of life. He has *promised to assist* them through their whole christian course. The apostle Paul speaks with confidence to christians upon this subject. "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." Again he says in the same epistle, "Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." And speaking to those who had embraced the gospel and trusted in Christ, he says, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession." The apostle Peter likewise taught christians in general the absolute certainty both of their finally persevering in holiness, and of their finally possessing their promised inheritance. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Thus God has abundantly promised to carry on the good work which he has begun in the hearts of believers, until the day of Jesus Christ. And this promise of the aid and earnest of the Spirit to the heirs of salvation is a peculiar proviso in God's last Will and Testament. Other testators often propose conditions to their intended heirs, but never engage to make them actually perform the conditions proposed. This however is essential to the design and form of God's revealed Will. If this article were not inserted, the legatees not only might, but certainly would, fail of obtaining their eternal inheritance.

It must be farther observed under this head, thirdly, that God has made a proviso in his Will, by which he retains his original right to chastise, or punish believers, in case they prove negligent in duty, or disobedient to his righteous commands. In the eighty-ninth Psalm, he expressly declares concerning his children, "If they forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and

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their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." And agreeably to this, the apostle asserts in the twelfth of Hebrews, that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." These are the conditions proposed in God's last Will and Testament, upon which all true believers are justified, pardoned, and accepted.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said concerning the character and justification of believers, that they are still in a state of probation. Though in consequence of their justification, their probationary state is materially altered, yet it is by no means terminated. Before they believed, they "were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." But since they believed, they "are made nigh by the blood of Christ," and are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Before they became believers, they were upon trial, whether they would repent and believe the gospel; but after they have repented and believed, they are still upon trial whether they will continue to exercise faith, repentance and new obedience. Though they have the promise of divine assistance to persevere in well doing, which renders their final salvation certain, yet this certainty does not put a period to their state of trial. It was certain before they believed that they would believe, but that certainty did not put an end to their probationary state. So, since they have believed, the certainty of their persevering in faith, and love, and every holy affection, does not put an end to their probationary state. The reason is, their salvation is still suspended upon conditions, and these very conditions constitute a state of probation. Their state of trial is precisely the same as if it were not certain that they will finally perform the conditions upon which their salvation is suspended. Christ himself was in a state of trial while he was about his Father's business here on earth. His Father appointed him a work to perform, and promised him a glorious reward, upon condition of his finishing the work which he had given him to do. He also promised to hold his hand and support him through all his labors and sufferings; so that it was infallibly certain that he would finish his work and receive his promised reward. But the certainty of his fidelity and obedience unto death did not put him out of a state of probation. The case is exactly the same in re-

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gard to believers. Though they are justified, and have received the Spirit of promise, which renders their salvation absolutely certain, yet they are still in a probationary state, because their salvation is suspended upon their fulfilling the conditions of their final and complete pardon. And the more certain it is that God will hold them in his hand, guard them from danger, and assist them in duty, the greater is their obligation, as well as encouragement to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, until they finish their course, and receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

2. If God justifies believers upon the terms which have been mentioned, then it is easy to reconcile his conduct towards them in this life, with his perfect rectitude. He rebukes, and chastens, and scourges, every son whom he receiveth. David declares that "many are the afflictions of the righteous;" and this declaration we find verified every day and every where. Though these afflictions are fatherly chastisements, and designed to promote the spiritual benefit of believers, yet they are real punishments for sin. But how can God consistently punish them in this life, any more than in the next, if he fully and unconditionally forgives all their sins at the time of their justification? When a prince completely pardons a rebellious subject who has been fairly tried and condemned, he can never afterwards legally or justly punish him for his rebellion, which he has fully and finally forgiven. But if he only partially and conditionally forgives him, as Solomon did Shimei, he may punish him either less or more, according as his clemency and wisdom shall direct. All mankind are naturally rebels against God; but when they repent and believe the gospel, he does, by his last Will and Testament, partially and conditionally forgive their numerous acts of rebellion and disobedience, with a proviso that he will chastise them for their past, present, and future sins, as often and as severely as his glory or their spiritual good may require. And according to this view of the doctrine of justification, there is no difficulty in reconciling God's fatherly chastisements of believers, with his covenant faithfulness. When he visits their iniquities with a rod in this life, he treats them not only as they deserve, but as he has expressly declared that he will treat them, in the very instrument by which they are justified. But if we should suppose with the Antinomians, that God does, at or before the time of men's becoming believers, fully and finally forgive all their past, present and future sins, we could not avoid the absurd consequence which they draw from it, that believers, after they are once completely justified, can do nothing either to promote or to hinder their final salvation; which opens the door to perfect licentious-

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ness. Or if we should suppose with the Arminians, that there is a first and second justification of believers, we could not avoid the absurd consequence which they draw from it, that believers may finally fall away after their first justification, and eventually perish; which is contrary to the whole tenor of scripture, and to the whole design of the gospel. Hence we are irresistibly led to conclude that the only scriptural and consistent doctrine of justification is that which we have endeavored to explain, and which is evidently contained in God's last Will and Testament. This entirely harmonizes with the character and conduct of God, with all other doctrines of the gospel, and with the duty, the peace, and the safety, of true believers.

3. It appears from the representation which has been given of justification in this discourse, that there is a propriety and consistency in believers praying every day for the pardon of all their sins, whether committed before or after they were justified. As none of their past or present sins have been fully and unconditionally forgiven, so God may chastise them for the iniquities of their youth, as well as for those committed in any later period of life. Job considered his sore afflictions as fatherly chastisements for the iniquities of his youth. He said to God under his correcting hand, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." As God had a right to chastise Job for his sins, so he had a right to chastise him, at what time, by what means, and in what measure, he saw best. It properly belongs to God, to determine when he will chastise believers for their past offences. He may delay to chastise them either a shorter or longer time after they have offended; so that they are continually liable to be chastised for some of their past transgressions. This renders it proper and necessary that they should ask God, every day, to forgive all their sins, and never to treat them according to the magnitude and multitude of their offences. We find that believers under the Old Testament prayed for the forgiveness of their sins, through the whole course of their lives. This appears from the prayers of David and of the people of God, recorded in the book of Psalms. The daily duty of christians to pray for forgiveness is still more evident from that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples. "After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." It appears from this petition, in connection with the preceding one, that it is as much the duty of believers to pray for forgiveness every day,

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as to pray every day for their daily bread. They certainly commit new sins every day, in addition to all their past transgressions; and for all these offences they deserve to be chastised. They have reason to fear, therefore, that God will sooner or later chastise them, unless they humbly and fervently pray for his pardoning mercy every day. Their partial and conditional forgiveness at the time of their justification does not supersede the duty and propriety of praying for the forgiveness of all their sins, so long as they remain in their present imperfect and probationary state. It is only on the supposition that the justification of believers consists in partial and conditional forgiveness, that we can see the duty and propriety of their praying for pardoning mercy as long as they live in this world. But if none of their sins are fully and unconditionally forgiven, at the time of their justification, then it is easy to see the duty, propriety and consistency of their praying continually for the pardon of all their sins, without distinction or exception, in order to escape both temporary and eternal punishment.

4. If believers, at the time of their justification, are only partially and conditionally forgiven, then it appears to be proper and important, that God should warn them to avoid every error and sinful course, and to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. They are still in a state of trial, in which they are always liable to be led astray from the path of duty, by the snares of Satan, the temptations of the world, and the remaining corruptions of their own hearts: and unless they escape these dangers, they cannot perform the conditions upon which their full forgiveness and final salvation is suspended. This God knows to be their trying and critical situation, and, for this good reason, gives them so many warnings to guard against their spiritual enemies, and so many exhortations to persevere in the practice of all the duties of Christianity. It is as certain that believers will fall away and be lost, if they neglect to perform the conditions upon which their title to eternal life is suspended, as it is that sinners will be finally condemned and destroyed, if they neglect to repent and believe the gospel. If it be proper and necessary that God should exhort sinners to turn from their evil ways, to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life; then it is no less proper and necessary to exhort believers to resist the devil, to overcome the world, to endure to the end, to take heed lest they fall, and to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. These exhortations to those who are justified are perfectly consistent with their partial and conditional forgiveness, according to God's last Will and Testament; but upon no other ground. If they were completely and unconditionally

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forgiven, we could see no occasion for such divine exhortations and admonitions. The promise of persevering grace does not diminish, but increase their obligation and encouragement to live a holy, watchful, prayerful, and exemplary life. So the apostle Peter taught true believers in his day. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us *exceeding great and precious promises;* that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

5. We learn from what has been said, that, notwithstanding believers are but partially and conditionally forgiven at the time of their justification, yet they may continually maintain peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So long as they faithfully perform the conditions upon which God has made them heirs to eternal life in his last Will and Testament, they may be assured that he is reconciled to them, and will afford them the tokens of his fatherly affection and gracious presence. Christ said to his disciples, just before his death, "Yet a little while and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." While believers keep themselves in the love of God, and pay a cheerful

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obedience to all the intimations of his will, they perform the conditions upon which they are pardoned and justified, and enjoy that peace which the world cannot give nor take away. And upon this ground the apostle declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." So long as believers feel and express a filial spirit towards their heavenly Father, they may possess their souls in peace, and go on their way rejoicing in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, has promised to bestow upon all who are faithful unto death.

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SERMON XLVII.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS ONLY FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. — Acts, xiii. 38.

The apostle Paul determined to know nothing, in his preaching, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Whether he preached to Jews or to Gentiles, he commonly, and largely, insisted upon the atonement of Christ, as the only foundation of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. In the discourse which contains the text, he first speaks of the descent, the life and death of Christ, and then represents what he did and suffered, as the only ground of the pardon and justification of sinners.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." These words plainly teach us that forgiveness is the only favor which God bestows upon men, on Christ's account. In treating upon this subject, I shall,

I. Consider what we are to understand by forgiveness.

II. Consider what we are to understand by being forgiven on Christ's account.

III. Make it appear that forgiveness is the only favor which God bestows upon men on the account of Christ.

I. Let us consider what we are to understand by forgiveness.

To remit, to pardon, to forgive, are terms of the same import. To forgive a debt, is to cancel the obligation of the debtor to pay the sum which he engaged to pay. And to forgive sins, is to cancel the obligation of the transgressor to suffer the punishment which his sins deserve. Some have justly made a distinction between the guilt of blame and the guilt of punishment. When a man has sinned, he deserves to be blamed,

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and when he deserves to be blamed, he deserves to be punished. Every sin carries in it a desert of both blame and punishment, which never can be removed. The Deity himself cannot take away the demerit of sin, which is inseparable from its nature. After a man has once transgressed, his transgression will for ever remain, and justly deserve both blame and punishment. But though God cannot remove the demerit of sin, yet he can free men from the punishment of it. And in this, the essence of forgiveness consists. So far as God frees men from the punishment due to them for sin, so far he actually forgives them. Forgiveness may be partial, or total. Partial forgiveness is the remission of part of the penal evil which the sinner deserves. Thus rebels are sometimes partially pardoned. They are freed from the punishment of death, but not from certain civil disadvantages, such as the deprivation of former privileges, and an incapacity for future preferments. But total forgiveness removes all penal pains, evils, or inconveniences, arising from transgression. "Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come." And though God remits to every believer the future punishment of all his sins, yet he reserves it in his own power to punish him in this life, as often and as severely as he sees best. So that the forgiveness of sin in this life is not total, but partial. It consists, however, as far as it extends, in the prevention or removal of punishment. God does, for Christ's sake, absolve true believers from all punishment in a future state. He assures them that they shall be saved from the wrath to come, and never suffer that eternal death which is the proper and full wages of sin. Having shown what is to be understood by forgiveness, I proceed to consider,

II. What we are to understand by being forgiven for Christ's sake, or on his account.

Through Christ, for Christ's sake, on Christ's account, are phrases of one and the same signification. "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," says the apostle. Forgiveness comes through the medium of Christ. His atonement is the sole ground of pardon. God forgives for Christ's sake, or on account of what Christ has done to render it consistent with his character to absolve or release the transgressor from bearing the punishment due to him for sin. Sometimes men forgive for the sake of their own honor or reputation; and sometimes they forgive for the sake of compassion towards the offender. But God never forgives for his own sake, nor for the sake of the sinner, but merely for Christ's sake. Neither his own honor, nor the sinner's misery, is the ground of his forgiveness, but simply the atonement of Christ.

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God can consistently punish sinners without respect to Christ; but he cannot consistently pardon them, or free them from deserved punishment, without respect to the Mediator. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. There must be a peculiar reason for God's forgiving the guilty. And the atonement of Christ is the only sufficient reason for his forgiving the guilty. This indeed is sufficient; and while he forgives sinners entirely on Christ's account, he appears to be just, as well as gracious. The way is now prepared to show,

III. That forgiveness is the only favor which God bestows upon men, on Christ's account. This will appear, if we consider,

1. There was no need of an atonement, in order to God's bestowing any other favor than forgiveness. He can show favor to holy and innocent creatures, without any thing being done to render the displays of his goodness consistent with his character. From mere benevolence, he has raised the holy angels to the highest degrees of holiness, and caused them to drink of those rivers of pleasure which perpetually flow at his right hand. And when man was formed in his own image, he treated him in the same manner in which he treated, and will for ever treat, the angels of light. God placed him in the garden of Eden, and loaded him with benefits as long as he continued holy and innocent. And even now, he bestows innumerable blessings upon his degenerate offspring, without respect to Christ. He causes his sun to rise and his rain to fall upon the evil as well as the good, and grants as large a portion of the good things of this life to his enemies as to his friends. There is no temporal favor so great, but he can bestow it upon the vilest of men, as a mere act of sovereignty, without the least respect to Christ as mediator. But it is only through the atonement of Christ that he can and does forgive sinners. And from this we may justly conclude that forgiveness is the only favor which he grants to mankind merely for Christ's sake.

2. The great design of Christ's coming into the world, and making atonement for sin, was to open the way for forgiveness. This appears from the whole current of scripture. The types of Christ, under the law, represent his atonement as being designed to lay the foundation for forgiveness only. The paschal lamb was a type of Christ's death. "Christ our passover," says the apostle, "is sacrificed for us." But the paschal lamb, which was slain to preserve the Israelites from that destruction which fell upon the Egyptians, would not have been a proper type of the death of Christ, unless his death had been designed to lay the foundation of pardon, or freedom from punishment. The bullock that was slain for the sins of Israel, was a type of

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Christ's laying down his life for the sins of the world. But this bullock is said to make atonement for the express purpose of forgiveness. So we repeatedly read in the fourth chapter of Leviticus. If the whole congregation sin, it is said, the priest shall kill the bullock, and make atonement for them, and their sin shall be forgiven. Ver. 20. If a ruler sin, then the priest shall kill the bullock, and make atonement for him, concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven. Ver. 26. Or if one of the common people sin, the priest shall kill the bullock, and make atonement for him, and his sin shall be forgiven. All the sacrifices for sin, under the Old Testament, were designed to lay a foundation for forgiveness. Hence says the apostle in his exposition of the types in the epistle to the Hebrews, "without shedding of blood is no remission." This shows that the death or atonement of Christ was wholly designed to open the way for the remission of sin, or the exercise of pardoning mercy to penitent sinners.

The inspired writers represent the design of the sufferings and death of Christ in the same light. The evangelical prophet says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed." When Christ appeared and foretold his own death, he always represented it as being designed to lay a foundation for forgiveness, or to open the way for God to save sinners from the punishment of sin. "As Moses," says he, "lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Again he says, "The Son of man came — to give his life a ransom for many." And when he instituted the memorials of his death, he clearly explained the design of it to his disciples. Having taken the cup and given thanks, he said to them, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." The first time of his appearing to his disciples after his death, "He said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and *remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." In all these pas-

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sages Christ plainly intimates that the great design of his death was to open the way for the pardon, remission, or forgiveness of sin. Agreeably to these declarations of Christ, his apostles represented forgiveness as the great and only favor granted to sinners on his account. Thus Peter preached to the awakened multitudes on the day of Pentecost. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." In another discourse to persons in the same situation, he says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" that is, forgiven. And when he preached Christ to Cornelius and his family, he taught them, "that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." This is precisely the same language which Paul uses in the text. "Be it known unto you therefore, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." And Paul not only preached that the atonement of Christ was designed to procure forgiveness only, but he also wrote in the same manner in his epistles, in which he professedly explains the design of Christ's death. Treating upon this subject in the third chapter of Romans, he says, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." He also says to the Galatians, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The obvious meaning of these words is, that pardon, forgiveness, or freedom from the curse of the law, is the great and sole benefit we receive on Christ's account. Thus the types of Christ, his own declarations, and the declarations of his apostles, unite to prove that his atonement is the only ground of forgiveness, and forgiveness is the only favor which God ever grants to men on account of it. And it will farther confirm this truth, if we consider,

3. That believers are expressly said to be forgiven for Christ's sake. The apostle uses this phraseology in his exhortation to the Ephesians, when he says, "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God *for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you." In another place, speaking of Jesus whom God raised from the dead, he says, "Who delivered us from the wrath to come;" that is, from future and eternal punishment. He says again, "God commendeth his love towards us,

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in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "Much more then, being *justified by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through him." By the blood of Christ here, we are to understand his atonement, which the apostle says is the ground of justification, or freedom from eternal destruction, which is the proper expression of divine wrath. But there is one or two more expressions which the apostle uses respecting forgiveness through Christ, that deserve particular notice. After telling the Ephesians that they were chosen and accepted in Christ, he farther observes, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." And he makes the same observation to the Colossians. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." The mode of expression in these two passages plainly implies that forgiveness is the one peculiar favor which God grants to believers, merely in respect to the redemption of Christ. And this was undoubtedly the apostle's meaning; otherwise he would not have selected forgiveness from all other divine favors, and represented it as the great and only blessing bestowed upon believers, on Christ's account, or merely for his sake.

But here it may be objected, that the great design of Christ's atonement was to lay a foundation for the sanctification, rather than the forgiveness of sinners. To this purpose may be adduced that passage in the first of Matthew, where we read, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Also that passage in Titus, in which it is said of Christ, "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

To these and other passages of the same import, two things may be replied.

First, to be saved from sin generally means in scripture to be saved from the punishment of it, which is precisely the same thing as forgiveness. There does not appear any need of an atonement, in order to lay a foundation for the mere regeneration or sanctification of sinners. Though God could not have consistently forgiven Adam the first moment after he had sinned, without an atonement, yet he might have renewed or sanctified him, as an act of mere sovereignty, without any atonement, and without forgiveness. Hence we may conclude that it was not the primary or principal design of Christ, in coming and dying for his people, to redeem or save them from the power and dominion of sin; but to save or redeem them from the punishment of it. Though God meant to raise the elect from a state of sin to a state of holiness, yet all that

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Christ had to do, as a Redeemer, for this purpose, was to open a way for a pardon, by making a full atonement for sin. This being done, it belonged to the office of the Holy Spirit to sanctify and prepare them for the kingdom of glory.

But secondly, as God means to sanctify none but those whom he intends to pardon through the atonement of Christ, so his atonement is a remote, but not an immediate, cause of their sanctification. It is only the occasion, or cause, without which none would be sanctified, or prepared for heaven. There appears to be no propriety in God's renewing and sanctifying any whom he means to shut out of heaven and consign to everlasting destruction; though such a mode of treating sinners would not be inconsistent with justice, because they would deserve eternal misery after they were sanctified, as much as they did before. But there is no ground to think that God ever has sanctified, or ever will sanctify, any but those whom he means to pardon and save. Hence it appears that the atonement of Christ is designed to render it consistent with justice for God to pardon sinners, and consistent with wisdom to sanctify them. So that men are not sanctified on Christ's account, in the same sense in which they are pardoned or forgiven on his account. In a word, the atonement of Christ is the *occasion* of the sinner's regeneration, and the *sole ground* of his pardon or justification, which is perfectly agreeable to the leading sentiment in this discourse.

It may be farther objected, that we are required to ask for other favors besides forgiveness, in Christ's name, or for his sake; which seems to imply that God bestows not only forgiveness, but every other favor, on Christ's account. Among other texts, the following plainly convey this idea: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him."

To ask, or to do a thing, in Christ's name, very often means nothing more nor less than asking or doing a thing for the honor and glory of Christ. And this is the only proper meaning of the last of the above cited passages. And to ask or to do any thing for the honor and glory of Christ, is entirely consistent with

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our asking for, and God's granting us, forgiveness for Christ's sake, in distinction from all other favors.

But we readily allow, there is a propriety in asking for every favor for Christ's sake, though God grants only forgiveness on his account. The propriety lies here. We always need forgiveness when we ask for any favor; and to ask for any favor for Christ's sake, is to ask for forgiveness first, and then for the favor we request. This, we presume, is the real intention of every sincere christian when he asks for any divine favor, for Christ's sake. He feels his guilt, which stands in the way of his receiving any token of God's gracious approbation. And in this view of himself, he asks for favor in Christ's name, or that God would both forgive and show mercy. It is only because he feels the need of forgiveness, that he mentions the name of Christ in his petitions before the throne of grace. But whether we have or have not given the true sense of those texts, which require us to ask for every favor, in Christ's name, or for his sake, yet it is firmly believed that their true meaning does not militate against the doctrine, that it is only forgiveness which God grants to men merely on Christ's account.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If forgiveness be the only thing which God bestows upon men through the atonement of Christ, then we may justly conclude that his atonement did not consist in his obedience, but in his sufferings. Those who maintain that his atonement wholly consisted in his obedience, suppose that it was designed only to open the way for God to renew and sanctify sinners. And if this were the only end to be answered by his atonement, it is difficult to see why his atonement might not consist in his preaching, or in his working miracles, or in his wearing a seamless coat, or in his washing his disciples' feet, or in any act of obedience to his earthly or heavenly Father. Upon the supposition of his atonement being designed to lay a foundation for God's bestowing any other favor upon sinners than pardoning mercy, we can see no reason why it should consist in sufferings rather than in obedience; or in obedience, rather than in sufferings; or in both, rather than in either. But if it were designed to lay a foundation for forgiveness only, then we can see a good reason why it should consist wholly in sufferings rather than in obedience. His obeying for sinners could be no reason for God's forgiving them on his account, but his suffering for them might be a good reason for God's pardoning them on his account. His dying the just for the unjust, his tasting death for every man, or his suffering for those who de-

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served to suffer, was doing that which properly constituted an atonement for sin, according to our common ideas of an atonement, or doing that for which sin may be forgiven. It is the common opinion of mankind, that suffering or the shedding of blood is the only thing that can make atonement, or lay a foundation for the remission of sin. And since it appears, from what has been said in this discourse, that pardon, forgiveness, or remission of sin, is the only thing which God does actually bestow upon mankind on account of Christ's atonement, we may safely conclude that his atonement consisted wholly in his sufferings, and neither wholly nor partly in his obedience. It is the end which the atonement of Christ was designed to answer and does answer, that enables us to determine wherein it consisted. And if this be true, all who believe that the only end which Christ's atonement was designed to answer and does answer, was to lay a foundation for forgiveness, will also believe that it consisted altogether in his suffering and dying in the room of sinners.

2. If forgiveness be all that God bestows upon men, through the atonement of Christ, then forgiveness is not only a part, but the whole of justification. Calvinists have found a great deal of difficulty in explaining justification to their own satisfaction, or to the satisfaction of others. The reason is, that they have endeavored to make it appear that justification contains something more than pardon or forgiveness. The Assembly of divines say, that "justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." Agreeably to this definition, our Calvinistic divines generally maintain that justification consists of two parts, namely, pardon of sin, and a title to eternal life. Pardon, they suppose, is granted on account of Christ's death, or *passive* obedience; and a title to eternal life is granted on account of his righteousness or *active* obedience. But we find no warrant in scripture for thus dividing justification into two parts, and ascribing one part to the sufferings of Christ, and the other part to his obedience. The apostle in our text and context uses the terms forgiveness and justification in the same sense, or as signifying precisely the same thing. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." When we look into the Old Testament, we there find forgiveness used to denote the same thing that justification is used to denote in the New Testament. And it appears from the explanation which we have given of forgiveness, that it means the removal of all

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the natural evil or punishment due to sin. Complete forgiveness, therefore, is complete justification. After a sinner is forgiven through the death, or blood, or sufferings, of Christ, he can have no need of the obedience or righteousness of Christ to recommend him to the favor of God, or entitle him to eternal life. When a rebel is fully forgiven, he is by that very act restored to the favor of his prince. So, when a penitent, believing sinner is fully forgiven, his very forgiveness restores him to the favor of God, both in this life and that which is to come. It is a dictate of reason and scripture, that, after a sinner is renewed and forgiven, he stands as fair to enjoy eternal life as if he had never sinned and offended God. There is not the least foundation in scripture for the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ, nor for the distinction between forgiveness and justification. It was what Christ suffered that made the atonement for sin; that atonement is the sole ground of forgiveness, and forgiveness is the whole that God bestows upon men for Christ's sake. Hence forgiveness is not merely a part, but the whole of what can be conceived to be contained in justification. And this representation of justification is not only scriptural, but plain and intelligible to every capacity.

3. This subject shows that there is no inconsistency in maintaining that believers are justified entirely on Christ's account, and yet that they shall be rewarded for all their virtuous actions entirely on their own account.

The most plausible objection ever raised against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law, has been founded upon what the scripture says concerning believers' being finally rewarded for their own works. It must be allowed that the scripture does plainly teach us that all good men shall be rewarded for all their good deeds. "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings." "The wicked worketh a deceitful work; but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." "I am thy shield, and exceeding great reward," says God to Abraham. "In keeping thy commandments there is great reward," says David to God. Christ declares, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only,— shall in no wise lose his reward." He taught the same doctrine in the parable of the talents, in which he represents each servant as receiving a reward in exact proportion to his virtue and fidelity. And in his account of the proceedings of the last day, he represents the righteous as actually approved and rewarded solely on the account of their own virtuous and

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benevolent actions. It has been said, and may be said again, that these and many other passages of scripture plainly prove that all good men will be finally rewarded for all their good works; but how is this consistent with the notion of believers being justified by faith alone, without the deeds of the law? Can it be supposed that God justifies believers in this life upon a ground which is different from that upon which he will approve, accept and reward them in the great day of retribution?

This objection has given much trouble to those who hold the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone, through the atonement of Christ. Their common reply to it is, that believers will not be finally rewarded for their works, but only according to their works, for Christ's sake. But this answer does not seem to be satisfactory. The inspired writers assert, in as plain terms as language affords, that believers shall be rewarded on their own account. They never once bring into view the atonement of Christ, when they speak of the final reward of the righteous. Besides, there appears to be an absurdity in supposing that believers shall be rewarded according to their works, for Christ's sake. For, if they were to be rewarded for Christ's sake, it would seem that they should be rewarded equally, since they all have an equal interest in Christ. If they are to be rewarded for his, and not for their own sake, they should certainly be rewarded according to his, and not according to their own virtue. If his righteousness be the ground of their reward, it should also be the measure of it. There appears to be no other way, therefore, to reconcile the doctrine of the justification of believers by faith alone, with the doctrine of their being rewarded according to their works, but by admitting the leading sentiments in this discourse. If we only admit that all God bestows upon believers, for Christ's sake, is the forgiveness of their sins; then we can easily see how he can reward them according to their works, for their own sake. After he has forgiven them on Christ's account, there is nothing to prevent his rewarding them, on their own account.

This may be easily illustrated as follows. Suppose a king should offer a great reward to any one of his subjects who should solve a certain problem in mathematics. Suppose a mathematical professor in one of his universities, who was guilty of high treason, and condemned to die, should, the evening before the day appointed for his execution, solve the king's problem; would he not, in that case, be entitled to the king's reward? But how can he be rewarded for his discovery, when he must die for his treason? There is but one way supposable, and that is, by the king's granting him a full pardon. Let this be done, and he stands as fair to be rewarded,

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as if he had never offended. Just so the holy and virtuous actions of believers are as amiable and worthy of the divine approbation, as if they had never sinned; yet they cannot be rewarded, unless they are forgiven. But after God justifies, or forgives them, on Christ's account, they stand as fair to be rewarded for all their good deeds, as if they had never sinned and forfeited the divine favor. Thus there appears to be a perfect consistency between God's justifying, that is, forgiving believers, for Christ's sake, and yet rewarding them for their own sake, according to their works.

4. If all that God bestows upon men, for Christ's sake, is forgiveness, then there is no propriety in directing sinners to go to Christ for a new heart or sanctifying grace. Christ did not die for sinners, to procure their regeneration; but to procure their pardon or justification, after they are regenerated. God grants regenerating grace to whom he pleases, as an act of mere sovereignty, without any particular respect to the death or atonement of Christ. Sinners must be renewed, before they can believe in Christ, or partake of any benefit on his account. It is, therefore, contrary to the whole economy of redemption, to direct sinners to go to Christ for regenerating or sanctifying grace. But how often are they directed to go to Christ, and carry their unholy hearts to be sanctified, their hard hearts to be softened, their stony hearts to be taken away! This is a mode of preaching very different from that of the apostles. They preached through Christ the forgiveness of sins, not the renovation of the heart. They exhorted sinners to repent and believe, that their sins might be blotted out. There is a great propriety in directing sinners to go penitently and believingly to Christ for pardoning mercy, through whom alone they can obtain forgiveness in the sight of God. But there is a gross absurdity in directing them to go to Christ impenitently and unbelievingly, for faith and repentance. For the very meaning of going to Christ is, loving, believing, or trusting in him; which cannot be done with an unholy and totally corrupt heart. This mode of preaching has a direct tendency to give sinners a wrong idea of themselves, and of the atonement of Christ, and consequently, to destroy their souls for ever.

5. If the only thing which God bestows upon sinners for Christ's sake is forgiveness, then we may easily determine what it is that ministers have a right to offer to them in Christ's name. Some say that ministers have no right to make any offer to sinners in Christ's name, because an offer made to them would imply a condition to be performed on their part, which would be inconsistent with the very spirit and grace of the gospel. Others say that ministers have a right to offer sinners a new heart, or regenerating grace, upon the condition of their

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asking for it in the name of Christ. Neither of these opinions is agreeable to the leading sentiment in this discourse. The truth is, ministers have a right to make an offer to all in Christ's name, of that, and only of that, which God is ready to bestow upon them for Christ's sake; and that we have seen is pardoning mercy. God is willing to pardon, forgive, or justify all penitent believing sinners, on Christ's account. It is, therefore, the indispensable duty of ministers to offer the pardoning mercy of God to all who will believe in Christ, or cordially embrace the gospel. When Paul preached the gospel, he made this and only this offer to his hearers. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

Finally, we may infer from the whole tenor of this discourse, that no sinners under the light of the gospel have any ground to despair of finding pardon and acceptance in the sight of God, on account of the greatness of their guilt. When sinners become acquainted with their own hearts, and the nature, number and aggravations of their sins, they are apt to think that their guilt is too great to be forgiven. But since Christ has made a complete atonement for the sins of the whole world, and since God freely offers pardon to all without distinction who repent and believe the gospel, there is nothing but impenitence and unbelief that can shut them out of the kingdom of heaven. They are not to expect forgiveness for their own sake, but for Christ's sake; and for Christ's sake God is as ready to forgive the greatest as the smallest sinner. Indeed, the greatness of guilt in the truly penitent and humble is a ground of hope, rather than a reason for despair. So David thought and said. "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Where sin abounds, there grace can much more abound. It is in vain for sinners to go about to establish their own righteousness, and to depend upon their own worthiness to recommend them to the divine favor. They must become penitent and broken hearted for sin before they can be willing to be pardoned merely for Christ's sake. As soon as the publican sincerely cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," he went down to his house justified, pardoned, and accepted. As soon as the prodigal son repented and asked his father's forgiveness, his father freely forgave him all his offences. These instances were designed to convince all penitent sinners of God's readiness to forgive them upon the terms of the gospel. Be it known, therefore, to all sinners, without exception, that through Christ is preached unto them the forgiveness of sins; and if they will only confess and forsake their transgressions, they shall certainly find favor in the sight of God. Amen.

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SERMON XLVIII.

JUSTIFICATION THROUGH THE ATONEMENT.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins
Colossians, i. 14.

The apostle rejoiced that the Colossians had received the grace of God in truth; that they had been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; that they had been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son; "in whom," he says, "we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." The apostle here represents God as granting to men renewing grace, and a title to eternal life, as something distinct from pardoning mercy, which he ascribes solely to the blood or atonement of Christ. God can, as a sovereign, grant men regenerating grace before he pardons them through the redemption of Christ; and after he has pardoned them through the redemption of Christ, he can, as a sovereign, grant them every temporal, spiritual, and eternal favor he pleases. The atonement of Christ is the sole ground upon which God pardons or justifies believers, but it is only the occasion of his bestowing other blessings upon both believers and unbelievers. Forgiveness of sins is that only which God bestows upon men entirely on the ground of the atoning blood of Christ. The letter as well as the spirit of the text allows us to say,

That God forgives or justifies believers solely through the redemption or atonement of Christ. In order to set this subject in a true light, I shall show,

I. What is implied in forgiveness;

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II. That the atonement of Christ is the sole ground of forgiveness; and,

III. That all other blessings come to mankind merely in consequence of Christ's atonement.

I. Let us consider what is to be understood by God's forgiving, pardoning, or justifying believers. I use all these terms as synonymous; because to forgive, to pardon, and to justify believers, are phrases which the inspired writers use to signify the same thing. Accordingly, I shall use each of these terms in the same sense, in the present discourse. Sin is the transgression of the law, and the wages of sin is death. Believers as well as others have transgressed the law, and deserved the eternal death which it threatens to every transgressor. By God's forgiving them, therefore, we are to understand his pardoning, or not punishing, their iniquities; or his remitting, or not inflicting, the penalty of the law upon them. This is the strict and proper meaning of forgiveness, which, when complete, implies an entire removal of all the penal evils that the transgressor has incurred. When Pharaoh forgave his chief butler, he removed all the penal evils of his offence, and restored him to his former office. But there may be a partial forgiveness of an offence, without removing all the penal evils of it. A privy counsellor may prove unfaithful, and deserve to die; but the king may partially forgive him, and only displace and disgrace him. In forgiving, or justifying believers, God removes the condemnation of the law, and restores them to his forfeited favor. Christ says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." And the apostle says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," by a sentence of justification. After believers are forgiven, or justified, it is consistent for God to exercise not only the love of benevolence, but the love of complacency towards them, and to express his complacency by peculiar marks of his favor. They stand as fair for every token of divine approbation, as if they had never sinned. God declares that he loves them that love him, and if he loves them, he may express his love to them in whatever way he pleases. The pardon and forgiveness of believers is properly called justification, because it places them in a condition in which God may treat them as though they were and always had been perfectly innocent. I now proceed to show,

II. That God forgives, or justifies believers, entirely through the redemption or atonement of Christ. By redemption through the blood of Christ, the apostle evidently means the same as the atonement which he made by his sufferings and death on the

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cross. And we find that the other inspired writers of the New Testament use the words ransom, redemption, and propitiation, to signify the same as atonement. Believers are by nature children of wrath, even as others. They have broken the law of God, which threatens eternal death or everlasting punishment for the least transgression. This law knows no mercy nor forgiveness to the guilty, but lays God under moral obligations to punish them, unless something be done to make atonement for their sins. But nothing can make atonement for their sins, which does not express the same vindictive justice of God, which he expresses in the penalty of his law. This, sinners never could do for themselves by repentance, reformation, or works of supererogation. There was but one person in the universe who could make atonement for sin, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ; and he could do it no otherwise than by shedding his blood on the cross. It was solely by sacrificing his own life, or dying the just for the unjust, that he made such a propitiation, redemption, or atonement for sinners, upon the ground of which God can, consistently with the honor of his character and support of his government, forgive and save them from the wrath to come. And upon this ground alone the scripture every where represents him as forgiving or justifying believers. The apostle in the text ascribes forgiveness solely to the atonement of Christ; "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." He expresses the same idea in the same language, in Ephesians, i. 7. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." In the conclusion of the fourth chapter he says, "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." He states this doctrine more clearly and fully in the third chapter of Romans. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins — to declare, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Paul taught the same doctrine in his discourse at Antioch. "Be it

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known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Here forgiveness signifies the same as justification, and justification signifies the same as pardon, which believers receive entirely on account of Christ's atonement. Peter said to Cornelius and to those who were convened at his house, "We are witnesses of all things which Christ did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew, and hanged on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Christ himself taught this doctrine in the twenty-fourth of Luke. He said to his disciples just before he ascended to heaven, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." When those who were pricked in their heart on the day of Pentecost, "said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." Zacharias said at John's circumcision, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his way; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of sins." And agreeably to this prediction we read, Mark i. 4: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance, for the remission of sins." I have mentioned all these passages of scripture to show that God does pardon, or forgive, or justify, believers entirely through the redemption or atonement of Christ, and on no other ground. It only remains to inquire,

III. Whether he does not bestow all other blessings on mankind merely in consequence of Christ's atonement. The texts which have been cited to prove that God grants forgiveness to believers solely on account of the atonement of Christ, seem

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to prove, or at least to imply, that he bestows other favors merely in consequence of his atonement. But there is no occasion for insisting on this argument, for we have others sufficient to establish the point beyond all reasonable doubt.

1. It is an undeniable fact that God does bestow innumerable favors upon believers themselves, before they are interested in Christ by faith; and of course before they can be forgiven or justified on his account. He gives them food and raiment, and supplies their wants, while they are in a state of nature; and not only so, but he gives them the offers of salvation, and takes away their stony heart and gives them an heart of flesh, while they are under the condemnation of his holy law. These great and invaluable favors he bestows upon them before they are united to Christ, and before they can be forgiven or justified through his atoning blood. They must therefore be bestowed merely in consequence of it. And if God can bestow any other favor, except forgiveness, upon believers before they are justified through the atonement of Christ, then after they are justified through his atonement, he can bestow any other favor upon them, except forgiveness, merely in consequence of it. These inferences are plain and undeniable, because they are drawn from a plain and undeniable fact.

2. It is a plain and undeniable fact that God bestows ten thousand favors upon the non-elect, who never have been and never will be forgiven or justified through the redemption of Christ. The children of Israel who perished in the wilderness were highly favored. God carried them through the Red Sea, fed them with bread from heaven, and supplied their wants for many years; but they abused these and all other favors. They were shut out of both the earthly and heavenly Canaan. They were never forgiven or justified through the blood of that atonement which their sacrifices typified. And from this we must conclude that they received all their blessings, not on the ground, but only in consequence of the blood which Christ shed on the cross.

3. It is agreeable to the dictates of reason and scripture to suppose, that God may act as a sovereign in bestowing any favors upon mankind, except forgiveness. This favor he cannot bestow in a way of sovereignty, because the rectitude of his government, and the beauty of his vindictive justice, must be displayed in forgiving the transgressors of his law. If he could have consistently forgiven sinners without an atonement, in a way of sovereignty, he might have saved all the human race in this plain and easy way. Why then did he not adopt this plan of salvation? He has not adopted it, and no reason can be given why he has not adopted it, but because he knew

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that nothing but an atonement for sin could render it consistent with his vindictive justice to forgive the transgressors of his just and holy law. Accordingly, he gave his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, to suffer and die on the cross in the room of sinners; by which he has displayed his vindictive justice as clearly, as he could have done by actually inflicting the penalty of his law upon the whole human race. So that he can now be just in justifying all penitent believers, through the vicarious death and sufferings of the Divine Redeemer. This plan of redemption has rendered it consistent for God to grant forgiveness to all true believers through the blood of Christ, and to grant any other favor to them, and to the rest of mankind, as an act of mere sovereign goodness. Thus it appears that God can and does bestow innumerable blessings upon both believers and unbelievers, not on the ground, but only in consequence, of the atonement of Christ.

Though we feel satisfied that we have established this important point, yet, since "an opinion has gone forth" that we have not established it, there seems to be a propriety in saying something to weaken, if not to destroy, the influence of that vagrant opinion, which has appeared in the shape of a formidable objection. Though the objector concedes "that it is no part of his system that Christ obeyed in our room to supersede the necessity of our obedience, as he suffered in our room to supersede the necessity of our sufferings;" and though he still farther concedes, "that we are not rewarded for two things at once, (Christ's obedience and our own) but rather that two persons in different senses are rewarded for the same thing;" yet he insists, that we are rewarded and receive every blessing, whether temporal, spiritual, or eternal, on account of Christ's righteousness, in distinction from his atonement. He says we have no righteousness of our own which satisfies the demands of the law, and therefore we have no righteousness which God can approve and reward, only through the legal reward of Christ's perfect righteousness. But who ever heard of a legal reward before? It is a solecism. No law, human or divine, ever promises a reward to those who obey it. The governor may offer a large reward to any man who shall apprehend a robber; but this offer is no law, because it has no precept, nor penalty. It does not command any man to go after and apprehend the culprit, nor threaten to punish him if he neglect it. He is liable only to the loss of the reward, which is no punishment at all. And it is equally true that no divine law promises a reward to the obedient. God did not promise to reward Adam, if he should perfectly obey the law of Paradise. It is true, there may be a federal reward, or a reward promised to

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the fulfilment of certain conditions in a mutual covenant. Such a reward was promised to Christ, if he fulfilled the conditions of the covenant of redemption; and such a reward he has partly received, and will fully receive at the consummation of all things. But this is no legal reward. The notion of a legal favor or reward is altogether unfounded and visionary. No reward is an expression of distributive justice, but only an expression of discretionary goodness. This our Saviour beautifully illustrated by the conduct of a master, and the conduct of a householder. "Which of you," he says to his hearers, "having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: We have done that which was our duty to do." Here Christ discards the idea of a legal reward in the most pointed terms. And in the parable of the householder, he represents a reward as being, in its own nature, perfectly gratuitous. The parable is this. "An householder went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle — and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right I will give you." "Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle." "He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." At even, his steward calls the laborers, and gives them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. "And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, who have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am

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good? So the last shall be first, and the first last; for many be called, but few chosen." There can be no doubt that this parable was designed to illustrate the absolute sovereignty of God, in bestowing both temporal and eternal rewards upon mankind. If pardon and justification both signify the same as forgiveness, and if believers, after they are forgiven, stand as fair to be rewarded as if they were innocent, then we may safely conclude that believers are forgiven solely through the atonement of Christ, but are rewarded merely in consequence of his atonement. Though a multitude of texts have been heaped together to prove the contrary of this conclusion, yet they are all perverted and misapplied; being construed upon the false principle that believers are rewarded through the medium of the legal reward of Christ's righteousness. The objector appears to be more of a superficial and sophistical, than of a metaphysical reasoner, in arguing from a false principle against plain and undeniable facts.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God the Father forgives or justifies believers solely through the redemption or atonement of Christ; then it is easy to see how all the blessings which God has ever bestowed, or ever will bestow upon all intelligent creatures, have flowed and will flow, directly or indirectly, through the medium of Christ. God the Father created all things according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. His plan of redemption comprised all creatures, all objects, and all events. If he had not formed this great and comprehensive design of redeeming some of the fallen race of man, he would not have created the heavens and the earth, nor given existence to any rational or irrational beings. The whole work of creation was designed to be subordinate and subservient to the great work of redemption. And he concerted this plan in order to lay a foundation to bestow the largest and richest favors upon the whole universe, that infinite wisdom, power and goodness could bestow. Accordingly, Christ is represented as the medium of the most perfect union and blessedness of all holy beings in heaven and earth. This the apostle teaches, both in his epistle to the Ephesians, and in that to the Colossians. To the Ephesians he writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ;* according as he hath chosen us *in him*, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to him-

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self, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." Again he says in the same epistle, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things *by Jesus Christ*, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." And to the Colossians he says, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created *by him* and *for him*." These passages clearly show, that the work of redemption comprises all the works of creation, as means or subordinate causes of carrying into effect the supreme purpose of God to save sinners through the death and mediation of Christ. Though God the Father intended to forgive or justify believers, only on account of the atoning blood of Christ; yet he meant that all his intelligent creatures should partake more or less of the happy consequences of his mediatorial work, which will augment the blessedness of heaven for ever. There is an important sense, therefore, in which it is true, that all the temporal, spiritual, and eternal good that mankind have enjoyed and will enjoy, comes to them through the medium of Christ.

2. It appears from what has been said, why God cannot forgive or justify sinners before they become believers. While the elect continue in the state of nature, they continue in the state of condemnation. God cannot become reconciled to them, before they become reconciled to him, and to the way of

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salvation through the blood of Christ. For before they do this, they have no interest in his atonement. And it is no more consistent with the vindictive justice of God to pardon sinners before they believe, than to pardon them without an atonement. Hence we find, that love, repentance, and faith, are made the conditions of forgiveness throughout the New Testament. To deny all conditions of justification is implicitly to deny that believers are justified entirely through the atonement of Christ. The foundation of justification is totally distinct from the conditions of it, and is laid in Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." It is the part of sinners not to lay the foundation, but only to perform the conditions of justification. These are not arbitrary, but necessary conditions. They must exercise love, repentance, and faith, in order to become united to Christ, and to receive pardoning mercy through his atonement. God can grant them every other favor but forgiveness, before they embrace the gospel and become believers. This he cannot grant nor they receive, before they become reconciled to God, renounce all self righteousness, and are willing to be forgiven through the atonement of Christ alone.

3. It appears from what has been said, that both Antinomians and Arminians have run into equally great, though very different errors, respecting the true scriptural doctrine of justification. The Antinomians have supposed that believers are justified through the atonement of Christ, by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. From these just and scriptural premises, they have drawn a very unjust and unscriptural conclusion. They suppose that believers are under no obligation to perform good works, because Christ has both suffered and obeyed in their room and stead; so that their justification and salvation do not in the least depend upon any thing they can do, either before or after they are justified. They hold that neither good works nor bad works can promote or prevent the salvation of believers. They build this false and dangerous opinion upon what the scripture says concerning justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. They suppose that justification implies not only forgiveness, but a title to eternal life; and that there is no difference between God's forgiving and rewarding believers. This is a great mistake; for though God forgives believers solely on account of the atonement of Christ, yet he does not reward them for his obedience, but for their own. But the Arminians deny the distinction between God's forgiving and rewarding believers, which leads them into an error concerning justification, that is directly opposite to the Antinomian error. They suppose that God justifies, as well as

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rewards believers, for their good works. They allege in favor of their opinion, the parable of the talents; the numerous promises which God has given, that he will reward good men for all their good deeds; and the representation which Christ has given of the final rewards of the righteous at the last day.

Now, it is easy to see that both Arminians and Antinomians are really erroneous in their respective opinions concerning the doctrine of justification; and it is no less easy to perceive what has led them into their different errors. They have both overlooked the plain and important distinction between the ground of God's forgiving believers, and the ground of his rewarding them. He forgives them solely on the ground of Christ's atonement, but he rewards them solely on the ground of their own good works. It is impossible to maintain the true scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone, and at the same time, steer clear of the Antinomian error on the one hand, and the Arminian error on the other, without making this distinction. Those who have denied that believers are rewarded for their own good works, have often attempted it, but without success. Some have said that though believers are forgiven or justified solely on the ground of Christ's atonement, yet they are rewarded solely on the ground of his imputed righteousness or obedience. And it has been said of late, that though believers are forgiven or justified solely on the ground of Christ's atonement, yet they are rewarded solely on the ground of his legal, not imputed, righteousness or obedience. But this, and every other way, which has been devised to reconcile the justification of believers wholly on account of the atonement of Christ, with the numerous and express promises of God, to reward them entirely on account of their own obedience or good works, is clogged with perplexing difficulties. For if they are rewarded as well as pardoned for Christ's sake, why are they not to be rewarded equally? Or if they are to be rewarded for Christ's sake, why are they not promised to be rewarded for Christ's sake, instead of their own, as they are promised to be pardoned for Christ's sake, and not for their own? Or if they are to be rewarded for Christ's sake, why are they not required to perform certain conditions in order to be rewarded for Christ's sake, as well as required to perform certain conditions in order to be pardoned for Christ's sake? These questions cannot be answered, on the supposition that they are to be rewarded, as well as pardoned, on Christ's account. But the doctrine of forgiveness and the doctrine of rewards, as stated in the New Testament, are perfectly consistent and plainly intelligible, though Antinomians and Arminians, and others, have blended, confused and perplexed them.

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Finally, it appears from what has been said, that it is of great importance to understand the true scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone, without the deeds of the law. Luther considered this doctrine as one of the most essential doctrines of the gospel. He wrote as well as preached more upon this than any other doctrine. He called it, *articulus stantis, vel cadentis ecclesiæ;* the doctrine upon which the church must either stand or fall. It is the only solid ground upon which men can safely build their hopes of escaping the wrath to come, and obtaining eternal life. If the proper distinction between the ground of forgiveness and the ground of rewards was clearly understood and believed, ministers would not direct impenitent, inquiring sinners to go to Christ, as they are, for a new heart, instead of going to him for pardoning mercy; which is contrary to the direction of Christ and the apostles. The inspired writers uniformly direct sinners to repent and believe the gospel, before they can expect to be pardoned and justified through the atonement of Christ.

It is the proper official work of Christ to forgive sins, but not to change the heart; which is the proper office of the Holy Spirit. There is but one proper mode of directing impenitent, inquiring sinners, and that is to direct them to love God, repent of sin, and believe in Christ, in order to be forgiven, pardoned, or justified in the sight of God. God has made no promise to the impenitent and unbelieving, that he will give them a new heart; but he has abundantly promised to forgive all penitent, believing, returning sinners. To exhort sinners to go to Christ for a new heart, has a direct tendency to prevent them from going to him for pardon and justification; for they will think that their going to Christ for a new heart is doing their duty, for which they ought to be justified, independently of the atonement of Christ. They are naturally self righteous, and self righteousness is incompatible with saving faith. A mistake with respect to the sole foundation of justification before God is not only a common, but a dangerous mistake. There is reason to fear that it has proved the eternal ruin of many, who have had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

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SERMON XLIX.

ETERNAL LIFE PROMISED TO THE OBEDIENT.

And he answering said, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.—Luke, x. 27, 28.

Our Saviour was a teacher sent from God, and he improved all proper seasons and opportunities of preaching and discoursing upon religious subjects. As he taught very important and interesting truths, in a very easy, plain and familiar manner, the common people heard him gladly; but the more learned Jewish instructers thought they knew too much about their laws and religion to need any instruction from him, and therefore never sought to hear him preach or converse, in order to learn, but only to raise objections, or put puzzling questions. While he was conversing upon the solemn subject of divine sovereignty, "Behold, a certain lawyer," or Jewish teacher, "stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Though Christ knew his sinister motive in asking this question, yet, as it was a serious and interesting question, he gave a direct, plain and serious reply to it. "He said unto him, what is written in the law? How readest thou?" This was a proper reply to one who was a professed teacher of the law, and at the same time constrained him to answer his own question. "And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Christ then addressed him in the best manner to carry conviction to his conscience. "And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt

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live," or have eternal life. This is a plain and positive declaration, which places before us the following sentiment;

That God promises eternal life to all who obey his commands. I shall show,

I. What is implied in obeying God's commands;

II. That God does promise eternal life to all who obey his commands; and,

III. Why he promises eternal life to all who obey his commands.

I. I am to show what is implied in obeying God's commands. It is easy to see in what obedience to the divine commands consists. It must consist in doing what the commands of God require. The two great commands of the law require love to God and love to man. And to exercise this love is to obey these commands. So Christ asserts in the text. "This do," says Christ to the lawyer, "and thou shalt live." Love to God and man comprises all the holy and gracious affections which God requires in any of his holy precepts or commands. So Christ told another lawyer, who endeavored to entangle him in his talk. "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commands hang all the law and the prophets." All the divine commands are of the same nature, and require the same thing; that is, love to God and man. And upon this ground the apostle asserts that "love is the fulfilling of the law." Love is obedience to every command God has given in his word. The reason is, love is the fruit of the Spirit, and comprises every species of holy affections. Hence says the apostle, "The fruit of the Spirit is love," from which flows "joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." Love disposes men to repent of sin, to believe in Christ, to submit to providence, to do justly, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Or, in other words, it disposes men to feel and act in all cases, agreeably to every divine command. The least exercise of true love to God or man is true obedience; and the constant exercise of true love to God or man, is perfect obedience. Though we often speak of internal and external obedience, yet, strictly speaking, there is no ground for this distinction, because all true obedience is internal, and consists in the exercise of love. Mere external conformity to the divine commands is no obedience at all; and has nothing virtuous or praiseworthy in it. There is no virtue or obedience in external conformity to the divine commands, even when it flows from love; for all the

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virtue or obedience, in that case, wholly consists in the love from which it flows. So that it is love, strictly speaking, which fulfils the law, and is the essence of all true obedience to the divine commands. I now proceed to show,

II. That God does promise eternal life to all who obey his commands, or exercise those holy and benevolent affections which his commands require. God has always promised eternal life to those who obey his commands, both in the Old Testament and in the New. In Leviticus, xviii. 5, we read, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them." In Deuteronomy, xxxii. 46, 47, we read, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day — for it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life." In the thirtieth chapter of this book, Moses says to Israel, "See, I have set before thee this day, life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live." Nehemiah says to God, in confessing the sins of his people, "They hearkened not to thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them." God says by his prophet Ezekiel, "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." And again he says, by the same prophet, "I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them." David says, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." God himself says, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." And again he says, "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." In the New Testament we find the same promises of eternal life made to all who internally and externally obey the divine commands, from pure and holy exercises of the heart. Christ declared in his sermon on the mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace makers; for they shall be called the children of

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God." Christ promised the amiable young man in the gospel, eternal life, if he would obey the divine commands. "Behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Christ replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And he repeats the declaration, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And Christ taught this same truth by the parable of the talents. He said to each of the two faithful and obedient servants, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Thus it clearly appears from both the Old and New Testament, that God has always promised eternal life to all who internally and externally obey his commands. Indeed, the whole Bible is full of promises of eternal life to all who internally exercise, and externally express, that love which the divine law requires.

It now remains to show,

III. Why God promises eternal life to all who sincerely and cordially obey his commands.

Here it may be proper to observe,

1. That God does not promise eternal life to all who obey his commands, because their sincere and cordial obedience atones for their sin, and lays a foundation for pardon, for forgiveness, or justification in his sight. After men have once sinned, their future obedience can make no atonement for past transgression. Perfect obedience is their constant and indispensable duty. So that they can never do any thing more than their duty. If they sincerely repent, and reform, and love God perfectly, after they have sinned, neither their repentance, nor reformation, nor their perfect love to God, can have the least tendency to atone for their past disobedience. They still deserve to be punished with eternal death, which the divine law threatens for the least transgression; and God cannot forgive the least sin consistently with his vindictive justice, without an atonement made for it, by the sufferings of one who is not a transgressor. Accordingly we find that God never has pardoned, forgiven, or justified sinners on account of their own obedience, but only on account of the atonement for sin which Christ made by his sufferings and death on the cross. God did not pardon, forgive, or justify sinners after the first apostacy, on account of their repentance, reformation, or obedience; but only by faith in the Lamb of God, who was typified by the vicarious sacrifices appointed immediately after the first transgression of Adam. Adam offered sacrifices, Abel offered sacrifices, Noah offered sacrifices, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job offered sacrifices before the Mosaic dispensation; and after that, sacrifices were renewedly enjoined upon all the people of

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God, until Christ offered his own body on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. It was by faith in these sacrifices, which before and under the Mosaic dispensation typified the atonement of Christ, that men were pardoned, forgiven, or justified; and not by their love, repentance, or obedience. We are expressly told that Abel was a believer, Enoch was a believer, Noah was a believer, Abraham was a believer, and all the patriarchs were believers. For it is said, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." These promises respected the coming and death of Christ the Messiah, whose death was typified by the vicarious sacrifices that were appointed to make atonement for sin. God first promised to Adam that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. He next promised to Abraham that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; and that seed, the apostle tells us, was Christ. Moses foretold that Shiloh should come. Isaiah foretold that Christ should pour out his soul unto death, and make his soul an offering for sin. Daniel foretold that Messiah should be cut off, but not for himself. The gospel was symbolically preached to Adam, to Abraham, and to all under the law, by the vicarious sacrifices which typified Christ as a suffering Saviour. And it was by faith in a Saviour to come, that all true penitents were pardoned, forgiven, or justified; and not by their own obedience or righteousness. The apostle Paul takes a great deal of pains to show that men were pardoned or justified by faith, on the ground of Christ's atonement, before the gospel dispensation, as well as after it. To the Romans he says, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." After this he asks, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." To this doctrine the apostle knew that the Jews, who relied on their obedience or good works for justification, would be ready to object and say, Why was not this doctrine of justification by faith alone taught before the gospel dispensation, if it were true? He implicitly says it was taught even before the Mosaic as well as christian dispensation. "What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was

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counted to him for righteousness." As Abraham, who lived before the law, was not justified by works, so those who lived under the law were not justified by obedience. So the apostle expressly tells the Jews. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." And again he says, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Thus it appears that God does not promise eternal life to those who obey his commands, because their obedience atones for their sins, and lays a foundation for their pardon, forgiveness, or justification. Nor,

2. Does God promise eternal life to those who obey him, because their obedience merits eternal life? Though obedience to the divine commands is really virtuous and intrinsically excellent, yet it is not meritorious. The obedience of a creature can lay no obligation upon his Creator. Men are the servants of God, and in that character they cannot merit any good by their obedience to their divine Master. This Christ beautifully illustrated in a discourse with his disciples. "Which of you having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by when he has come from the field, go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant, because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." This has always been the feeling of all the penitent and obedient servants of God. Jacob acknowledged before God, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant." Isaiah acknowledged his own and his people's unworthiness. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The church in Jeremiah's day made a still more humble acknowledgment of their unworthiness. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." The penitent prodigal renounced all claim to any favor. He said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." But Paul is still more particular and explicit, in renouncing all claim to favor on account of his own righteousness and obedience: "If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in

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the flesh, I more; circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." All true penitents feel as Paul felt in respect to obedience. They know, and are willing to acknowledge, that they cannot merit the least favor at the hand of God, by their best obedience to his commands. He does not, therefore, promise eternal life to those who obey him, because their obedience merits eternal life. But though God does not promise eternal life to those who obey him, because their obedience atones for their sins, nor because their obedience merits any favor at his hands; yet,

3. He does promise eternal life to them because their obedience is a proper ground, reason, or condition, for bestowing upon them such a gracious and unmerited reward. Though their obedience to his commands does not render them meritorious, yet it does render them virtuous and amiable, and worthy of his approbation; and it becomes him, as a being of perfect rectitude and benevolence, to express his cordial approbation of their cordial obedience, by giving them a free, gracious and eternal reward. His bestowing good upon the ungodly world, is no expression of his approbation of their character and conduct; but his bestowing good upon them that are good, is an expression of his approbation of their goodness. And every expression of his approbation of their duty and obedience, is in the strictest sense a real and proper reward. Not indeed a reward of justice, but a reward of grace. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." God loves those whom he has pardoned, forgiven or justified, by faith, through the atonement of Christ; and can consistently express his approbation of their love, obedience, righteousness or good works, by rewarding them with eternal life. Accordingly, he has promised eternal life to all who obey his commands, as an expression of his approbation of their duty and obedience, which is really a great and gracious reward, but not too great for an infinitely gracious God to bestow. So the apostle viewed the matter. "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered

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him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" All things include eternal life. And so the apostle explains it in a parallel passage. He says to the same believers, "But being now made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Eternal life is a gift of grace, or a reward of grace, as really as death is the wages or reward of sin. All the good that God bestows upon good men, either in this life or the life to come, he bestows as an expression of his approbation of their obedience or good works, which is a gracious reward. It was a proverb in Israel, that "to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward." And it is not strange that this should be a proverb in Israel; for all the promises of good, which God made to that people, were promises of a gracious reward for their obedience. Hence David says to God, In keeping thy commandments there is great reward. Christ abundantly taught the same doctrine of eternal rewards for obedience. He says to those who patiently endure reproach, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." He says, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." He says to every one that exercises true self denial, that he shall receive an hundred fold in this world, and in the world to come eternal life. He said to each of the servants that properly improved their talents, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And he says, that when he shall come to judge the world at the last day, he will reward the righteous for their good deeds, with life eternal, and the wicked for their evil deeds, with everlasting punishment. Thus it appears that God does promise eternal life to all who love and obey him with all their hearts, not because their obedience atones for their sins, and lays a foundation for their pardon, forgiveness or justification, nor because their obedience merits any favor at his hands, but because it becomes him to express his approbation of their obedience and good works, by a free, gracious, unmerited and eternal reward.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that there is a wide and essential difference between the ground of God's pardoning, forgiving, or justifying men, and the ground upon which

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he rewards them with eternal life. It appears from both the Old and New Testament, that God pardons, forgives, or justifies sinners exclusively upon the ground of the atonement for sin, which Christ made by his sufferings and death on the cross. He pardons or justifies them freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, without paying the least respect to their love, penitence, obedience or good works. Though he can give men many other good things in a way of sovereignty, yet he cannot consistently pardon or justify them upon any other ground, than the atonement of Christ. But after he has pardoned or justified them, he can consistently bestow upon them both temporal and eternal favors, on the ground of their gracious affections and cordial obedience. The ground, therefore, upon which God pardons or forgives men, is totally different from the ground upon which he rewards them with eternal life. This distinction runs through the Bible, but is most plainly asserted, illustrated and proved, by the inspired writers of the New Testament. Paul took a great deal of pains to enlighten both Jews and Gentiles upon this subject, and to convince them, that the atonement of Christ is the sole ground of pardon or justification, exclusive of the deeds of the law, or any good works. It appears to have been his main object in writing his epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, aud to the Hebrews, to show that Christ died as a vicarious sacrifice; that his vicarious sufferings and death made an atonement for the sins of all mankind; and that God pardons, forgives, or justifies men solely on account of his atonement, without regard to any work of righteousness that they do or can do; while at the same time, he taught all true believers, that God promised to reward them for all their benevolence, self denial, patience, submission, and every act of cordial obedience to his command. But he never intimated that God would reward them for Christ's making atonement, or for their making atonement. For they never did or could make atonement, and consequently they never merited a reward for making atonement; and as Christ stood alone, and no one with him in making atonement, they did not deserve to be rewarded for what he voluntarily did and suffered; though it is true, that he deserved to be rewarded for making atonement. Accordingly, God promised to reward him, and has rewarded and continues to reward him, by giving him those for whom he intentionally suffered, and whom he died to save. It hence clearly follows, that if men are to be rewarded for any thing, they are to be rewarded for their cordial obedience to the divine commands. And it is proper, that God should approve of their free, voluntary acts of obedience,

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and give them a gracious, unmerited, and eternal reward, as he has abundantly promised in his word.

2. It appears from what has been said, that men were forgiven, pardoned, or justified, under the Old Testament, on the same ground that men are under the New. We know that men are now pardoned or justified on the sole ground of the atonement of Christ. The apostle expressly declares, that God justifies men freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And it appears from what has been said, that he justified or pardoned men under the Old Testament, on the same ground. Though he promised eternal life to all who obeyed his commands, yet he did not promise to pardon or justify them for their obedience, or good works. For he taught them to offer vicarious sacrifices, which typified the atonement of Christ, for which alone he pardoned or forgave their sins. And this demonstrates, that they were pardoned or forgiven on some other ground than their obedience to the divine commands; for if they were pardoned for their obedience alone, there was no occasion for their offering yearly and every day sacrifices, which were expressly said to be offered to make atonement for their sins. That those sacrifices were typical of the atonement, which Christ was to make by his sufferings and death on the cross, the apostle has clearly proved in his epistle to the Hebrews. And there is no doubt but that the penitent Jews viewed them in that light, and exercised faith in the promised Messiah. This is confirmed by what the apostle says concerning the unbelieving Israelites who perished in the wilderness. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." "For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit, not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Here we are told, that the gospel was preached under the Old Testament, and that some believed it, while others rejected it. Those that believed were pardoned and justified; but those who disbelieved were condemned and destroyed. Though God promised eternal life to all upon the ground of their obedience, yet he did not promise to pardon or justify them, unless they cor-

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dially embraced the gospel which was preached to them through the medium of the vicarious sacrifices, which typified the atonement of Christ, the sole ground of pardon and justification. All that ever have been pardoned and justified, under either the Old or New Testament, have been pardoned and justified in precisely the same way, and on the same ground. Though men have been rewarded for their obedience and good works, yet they have never been pardoned or justified on any other ground than the atonement of Christ.

3. It appears from what has been said, that the Socinians maintain a great and fatal error. They suppose that Christ was a mere man, and did not suffer and die as a vicarious sacrifice, to make atonement for sin. Of course they maintain, that men are pardoned and accepted in the sight of God, on account of their obedience or good works. This they endeavor to prove by two principal arguments. One is, that God is morally obliged to pardon sinners on account of their repentance and obedience. And the other is, that God did actually pardon sinners under the Old Testament on account of their repentance and obedience, without any atonement. This they infer from his promising eternal life to all who obeyed his commands. But this argument is fully refuted, by the vicarious sacrifices for sin which God required all men, from Adam to Moses, to offer; which, if they had any meaning, typified the atonement of Christ, without which there is no remission of sin. To deny the doctrine of atonement through the vicarious death and sufferings of Christ, is to oppose the whole current of scripture; and is subversive of the whole gospel, which has always been preached from Adam to this day.

4. This subject teaches us that the doctrine of pardon or justification by works, is both unscriptural and dangerous. I know that Arminians do not choose to say that men are justified for their works as being meritorious, and as laying God under obligation, in point of strict justice, to pardon and save them. But they are willing to say, that God does graciously forgive, pardon and justify them on account of their good works. This they strenuously maintain, in opposition to the doctrine of justification through the atonement of Christ alone. It is easy to see what leads them into this error. It is a supposition that God pardons men upon the same ground upon which he rewards them. They plead in favor of their opinion, that God promises eternal life to all who obey his commands, and that he actually rewards men for their obedience. They refer to his rewarding the two servants, who faithfully employed their talents; and more especially to the representation that Christ gives of the decision of the great day, when he says he will

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bestow eternal life upon the righteous for their good deeds of charity and mercy. This argument looks plausible, but is entirely fallacious, if what has been said is true, that God does not pardon men upon the same ground upon which he rewards them. And it appears from the whole current of scripture that he does not. It is only on the ground of Christ's atonement, that he does, or can pardon sin. But he can and does reward men, in mercy, for their obedience and good works. Though we have no right to deny the premises of Arminians, yet we have a right to deny the consequence which they draw from their premises. For though it be true, that God can and does reward men for their obedience and good works, yet it is false to say that he pardons or justifies them for any thing but the atonement of Christ. Their false doctrine is extremely dangerous, because it directly tends to lead men to build their hopes of pardon and salvation upon the ground of self righteousness, which Christ and the apostles every where condemn. Self righteousness destroyed the Pharisees, and well nigh ruined Paul himself. It is totally inconsistent with depending on Christ alone for salvation.

5. In the view of this subject, we may easily discover what it was that led the Jews into the fatal error of expecting to be saved by their strict observance of the various precepts and commands which God had given them. They did fall into this dangerous error. The Pharisee did, that went up to the temple to pray; and so did Paul before his conversion. Their error was owing to their ignorance. They had lost the knowledge of the true spirit, meaning and design of the Mosaic dispensation. They made no distinction between the moral law and the ceremonial law, which required them to offer those sacrifices, which were typical of Christ, and pointed out the ground of pardon through his atonement. They observed the ceremonial law just as they observed the moral law, and expected to be pardoned and saved by their obedience to both, without faith in Christ, who was preached to them by the vicarious sacrifices which they were required to offer, to make atonement for sin. This error Paul embraced, and supposed that in respect to the law he was blameless. But after he had discovered and renounced it in himself, he discovered and lamented it in his Jewish brethren. He speaks very feelingly and tenderly upon the subject. "Brethren, my heart's desire, and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the

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end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The apostle here lays open the whole cause of his brethren's expecting to be saved by their own righteousness, or obedience to the law of Moses. It was owing to their ignorance of the justice of God, which requires an atonement as the sole ground of pardon and justification; to their ignorance of the typical sense of the ceremonial law, which pointed to the atonement of Christ; and to their ignorance of the difference between the ground of pardon and ground of reward. Their false teachers had explained away the whole spirit and design of the Mosaic dispensation. And this led them to disbelieve and reject the gospel as Christ and the apostles preached it, in consistency with all the laws of Moses. And to convince those who vainly imagined that the law and gospel were inconsistent with each other, the apostle demands, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid; for if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." The whole Mosaic dispensation was designed and suited to lead men to the knowledge of the way of pardon and salvation, through the atonement of a Saviour to come. But the Jewish teachers, through ignorance, perverted and explained away the spirit and design of the Mosaic dispensation; and instead of showing that it was a school master to teach the way of salvation by Christ, they employed it as an unanswerable objection against the gospel. And many besides the Jews in former times, and the Socinians in modern times, have been equally ignorant and erroneous in respect to the doctrine of justification through the atonement of Christ alone.

6. We may justly conclude from what has been said, that though believers are pardoned or forgiven on Christ's account, yet they are not rewarded on his account. It is generally

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acknowledged by Calvinistic divines, that believers are pardoned or forgiven on the ground of Christ's atonement; but some of them maintain that they are rewarded for his obedience. Or in plainer terms, they suppose that believers are rewarded for Christ's obedience, as really as they are forgiven or pardoned for his atonement. This appears to be not only an error, but a palpable absurdity. We can see a good reason why God should pardon or forgive believers solely for Christ's sake, or entirely on the ground of his atonement, which rendered it consistent with his justice; but it appears very absurd that he should reward them for Christ's sake, or entirely on account of his obedience, in distinction from their own. Christ obeyed for himself, and believers obey for themselves. They are truly virtuous and praiseworthy for their own obedience; but they are not virtuous or praiseworthy for his obedience. God may with propriety express his approbation of their virtuous obedience, by giving them a gracious reward; but it is absurd in the extreme to suppose that he graciously rewards them for Christ's obedience. This supposition is not only repugnant to reason, but contrary to the whole current of scripture. We have made it appear, we trust, sufficiently plain, that God has abundantly promised, both in the Old and New Testament, to give eternal life to all who obey his commands, on their own account; and not on account of Christ's obedience, or sufferings. And we feel well satisfied that this scriptural doctrine never has been, and never can be refuted.

Finally. It is easy for sinners to see, in the view of this subject, what they must do to inherit eternal life. They often put this serious and important question, as though they could not answer it, and as though they could find no answer to it in the Bible. This can be owing to nothing but blindness of heart. They have often heard and read both the Old and New Testament, in which the way of life to sinners is plainly pointed out. There never has been but one way, in which sinners could obtain eternal life. They never could atone for their own sins, nor do any thing that merited salvation. But they have always been able to love God with all their heart, to repent of sin, and to believe in Christ, and rely upon his atonement, as the sole ground of pardon and justification in the sight of God. This is the only way of salvation revealed in the Bible. In this way sinners have been saved, both under the Old and New Testament. This is a plain way of salvation. For every sinner knows that he has transgressed the holy and righteous law of God, which threatens eternal death as the wages of sin; that he cannot atone for the least transgression; that he must rely upon that atonement which Christ has made by his sufferings

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and death on the cross; and that he cannot rely upon that atonement without renouncing his self dependence and self righteousness. This way of salvation is perfectly plain, and approves itself to every man's understanding and conscience; but no man can embrace it, without deep humiliation, self abasement, self condemnation, and unreserved submission to the absolute sovereignty of God. There is nothing that prevents sinners under the gospel from knowing what they must do to be saved, but the mere blindness of their hearts; and there is nothing which prevents their doing what will entitle them to eternal life, but the obstinacy of their hearts. They will not come to Christ that they might have life. They had rather rely upon their own righteousness, than to rely upon the atonement of Christ. They hate God and Christ, and love death; and death must be their doom, unless God in sovereign mercy both sanctifies and pardons them. God has done this for all that have been justified, and he will do this for all whom he has given to Christ.

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PART XV.

WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

SERMONS L.—LVI.

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SERMON L.

THE SPECIAL AND IRRESISTIBLE GRACE OF GOD IN THE CONVERSION OF SINNERS.

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. — Psalm cx. 3.

The great scheme of our redemption was concerted by the sacred Trinity, before the foundation of the world. The Father and Son mutually agreed, in the counsels of eternity, to perform distinct parts in carrying into execution this gracious design. The Son engaged to become incarnate, and lay down his life in the room of sinners. And the Father engaged to give the Son a certain number of the human race, as a reward for his sufferings and death. It is, therefore, in reference to this original covenant between the Father and the Son, that the former says to the latter in the text, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." These words naturally suggest this plain truth for our present consideration:

That God is able, by an act of his power, to make those willing to be saved, whom he has given to Christ.

In illustrating this subject, I shall endeavor to make it appear,

I. That God has given a certain number of mankind to Christ.

II. That they are naturally unwilling to be saved. And yet,

III. That God is able, by an act of his power, to make them willing.

I. I am to make it appear that God has given a certain number of mankind to Christ.

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The evangelical prophet, speaking of the suffering Saviour, expressly declares, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Agreeably to this and to other similar promises, Christ himself declares in the tenth of John, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." For these, in distinction from others, Christ prayed in particular, just before his death. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me." "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." This portion of mankind the apostle Paul often mentions, under various appellations. He calls them the fulness of Christ, the body of Christ, and the members of Christ. He represents them as originally predestinated to perfect holiness and future glory. "We know," says he, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Such is the united testimony of the inspired writers, that the Father hath given the Son a certain number of our fallen race, who shall be made holy in this life, and happy in the next. This leads me to show,

II. That these persons, like the rest of mankind, are naturally unwilling to be saved.

The text clearly conveys this idea. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." This mode of expression plainly implies that, antecedent to the day of divine power, the people of Christ are unwilling to be saved. And this will more clearly appear, if we consider,

1. That they are naturally enemies to Christ. They are represented under this character in the context. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." And again, "Rule thou in the

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midst of thine enemies." This is the true character of all sinners, without exception. Our Saviour, who was perfectly acquainted with the hearts of the unregenerate, plainly told them that they were serpents, a generation of vipers, and the children of the devil. And speaking of the same persons, to whom he had preached, and before whose eyes he had done many mighty works, he says, "Now have they both seen and *hated* both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, *They hated me without a cause.*" The elect, as well as the non-elect, naturally possess a spirit of opposition to Christ; and so long as they remain enemies to him, they say in their hearts, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

2. It appears from the conduct of sinners under the gospel, that they are unwilling to be saved. When Christ called upon them to come to him for life, they soon discovered a strong disposition to reject his gracious invitations. This led him to tell them in plain terms, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." And he foretold, in the parable of the gospel feast, that sinners would, in time to come, treat the offers of salvation with the same neglect and contempt. "Then said he unto them, a certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready.—*And they all with one consent began to make excuse.*" This prediction has been fulfilled throughout the christian world. How many thousands of the fallen race have been invited to accept of salvation, who have finally refused! And where has one been found who was naturally willing to submit to the terms of life? Universal experience proves that all men are naturally unwilling to believe in Christ. Though some sinners seem to be more friendly to the gospel than others, yet it appears from the conduct of all, that they are naturally and equally unwilling to comply with the terms of life. They do, indeed, make different excuses for slighting the gospel; but it is the same evil heart of unbelief which leads them to reject the counsel of God against themselves. The three thousand, who were converted on the day of Pentecost were as heartily opposed to Christ before their conversion, as any who imbrued their hands in his blood. Paul persisted in despising and opposing the gospel, until his heart was effectually subdued by an act of irresistible grace. And all who are now the friends of Christ, were once his real enemies, and totally unwilling to embrace the offers of salvation. The elect are no better by nature, than the non-elect; and were they left to themselves, they would finally refuse to be saved, and perish in their sins for ever. But yet,

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III. God is able, by an act of his power, to make them willing to accept of salvation. Since this is a point of great importance in the present discourse, I shall endeavor to establish it by a number of plain and conclusive arguments.

1. God has promised to make those willing to be saved, whom he has given to Christ. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The thing here promised is to be performed by the Father, though it seems to be ascribed to the Son. Any divine work may be ascribed to either person in the sacred Trinity. Accordingly we find in scripture, that the renovation of the heart is sometimes ascribed to the Father, sometimes to the Son, and sometimes to the Holy Ghost. In the text, the Father is speaking, and therefore he must be the person promising to make Christ's people willing, in the day of his power. And this farther appears to be the meaning of the text, from the preceding words. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." At another time, God the Father promised to subdue the hearts of sinners among his own people. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes." Also by the prophet Joel, God promised to pour out his Spirit in the last days upon all flesh, and bring them to a cordial reception of the peculiar blessings of the gospel. Now can we suppose that God would thus expressly promise to make men willing to be saved, unless he were able to bow their wills by an act of his power? Would it be consistent with his holiness and truth, to promise to subdue the hearts of sinners at a certain time and in a certain place, if he knew this to be an effect above his power to produce? Unless he had the supreme control over the hearts of men, we may presume he would never have promised to make his own and his Son's enemies willing to be saved, in the day of his power. Hence all his promises to renew the hearts of sinners, are so many proofs of his power to produce this saving change.

2. God has actually softened the hearts of the most hardened and obstinate sinners. As he promised to change the hearts of sinners in Babylon, so he punctually fulfilled his promise. He poured out his Spirit upon them, and raised them from spiritual death to spiritual life. He took away their hard and stony hearts, and gave them hearts of flesh. Though they had long repined at the ways of his providence, yet he brought them to a cheerful submission to his sovereignty. Nor was he less faithful to fulfil the promise made to Christ in the text. At the time appointed, which was the day of Pentecost, he brought three thou-

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sand of his enemies to his footstool. This the apostle Peter declares to be a fulfilment of the promise contained in the text and context, which he quoted and explained on that great occasion. "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens; but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." When Peter preached to Cornelius and to those at his house, God poured out his Spirit upon them, and gave them "repentance unto life." God opened the heart of Lydia, and made her willing to embrace the gospel preached by Paul. And before this, he made a still more signal display of irresistible grace, in the conversion of Paul himself. He was a blasphemer and persecutor. He determined to resist all means and motives to conversion. And he felt superior to any divine influence. But the King eternal, invisible and omnipotent, was able to lay him prostrate at the feet of that Jesus whom he had despised and persecuted. These, and many other instances of conversion which are recorded in the Bible, demonstrate the power of God to make men willing to be saved.

3. The scripture represents God as not only making men willing to be saved, but as making them willing by an act of his power. Paul speaking of himself and of other christians who were prepared for heaven, says, "Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God." He inculcates the same sentiment upon the minds of the saints of Ephesus. "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." And in the next chapter he goes on to say, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." In one place he says, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." This he explains, in the next words, to be God's making men willing to be saved. "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." In another place he says, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Farthermore, he represents God as beginning and carrying on a work of grace, by a powerful op-

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eration on the minds of men. To the Philippians he says, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And in the next chapter he says again, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." And for this gracious and powerful operation on the hearts of believers, he prays in the thirteenth of Hebrews: "Now the God of peace — make you perfect — to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight." According to these and many other passages of scripture, God makes men willing to be saved by an act of his power. He not only addresses their eyes and ears by external objects, and their understandings and consciences by moral motives, but he actually operates upon their hearts, and there produces new feelings or affections by the same almighty power which he exerted in creating the world, and in raising Christ from the dead. Nothing short of this can be meant by his raising men to spiritual life, making them new creatures, and working in them that which is well pleasing in his sight. To explain away such expressions, and make them mean moral suasion only, is to do violence to scripture, and wrest it in such a manner as to destroy at once both its meaning and usefulness.

4. The scripture represents God as making men willing to be saved, by an act of his power, in distinction from all other ways of producing this effect. To this purpose is that noted passage in the first of John. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God.*" Here the renovation of the heart is ascribed to a divine operation, in distinction from all other means or second causes. A like representation we find in the ninth of Romans. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The apostle's words, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, are still more expressive and definitive on this point. "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." He adds, "Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." The inspired writers all speak the same language upon this subject. They totally exclude men and means in the

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conversion of sinners, and ascribe the production of this effect to the immediate power of the Deity. I may add,

5. It appears from universal observation and experience, that nothing short of a divine operation upon the hearts of sinners is sufficient to draw them to Christ. Some suppose there are various ways in which God can make sinners willing to be saved, without any immediate operation upon their hearts. But it appears from fact, that this is the only way in which even Omnipotence can bring them to a cordial compliance with the gospel.

For, in the first place, God cannot make them willing to be saved by giving them a sense of guilt. He may awaken their consciences, and set their sins in order before them, and make them feel that they justly deserve his wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come. But will such a sense of criminality and ill desert reconcile them to the way of salvation by Christ? There is no necessary connection between conviction and conversion. Those under conviction have often expressed their sensible and violent opposition to God, to Christ, and even to heaven itself. Their sense of guilt, instead of diminishing, greatly increased the native enmity of their hearts against every thing holy and divine. It will be universally allowed that the hearts of the damned grow worse and worse under conviction. And from this we may conclude that should God give sinners in this world as great a sense of guilt as the damned actually feel, it would directly tend to harden, instead of softening their hearts. It does not appear possible, therefore, that God should change the hearts of sinners, by giving them a sense of guilt.

Nor does it appear possible that he should make them willing to be saved, by giving them a sense of danger. He often does give them as great a sense of danger as of guilt. He often uncovers destruction before them, and makes them feel from day to day that they are constantly exposed to drop into the bottomless pit. Though, in this situation, they anxiously desire to escape the damnation of hell, yet they have no disposition to repent and believe the gospel. But, on the other hand, the more clearly God shows them that he is able and disposed to punish them according to their deserts, the more vigorously and sensibly they oppose his holy and amiable sovereignty. And surely God cannot destroy the enmity of their hearts by that sense of danger which directly tends to increase it.

Nor, in the last place, can he make them willing to be saved by giving them a sense of the worth of their souls, and the importance of eternal happiness. He always gives them a sense of these things, when he awakens their consciences to

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feel their guilt, and opens their eyes to see their danger. Awakened and convinced sinners look upon the happiness of this life as less than nothing and vanity, in comparison with future and eternal felicity. They view saints as the only happy persons, and would give all the world, if they had it in their power, to gain an interest in Christ, and be in the situation of those who are rejoicing in the hopes of heaven. But these feelings have no tendency to destroy the enmity of their hearts against God, and prepare them for holy and heavenly enjoyments. Could the gates of heaven be set open, and could they be allowed to step in among the spirits of just men made perfect, they would choose to take up their everlasting residence among sinful, rather than among perfectly holy beings. Thus it appears to be out of the power of the Deity to convert sinners by moral suasion. All that he can do in this way is, to give them a realizing sense of their guilt, of their danger, and of the worth of their souls; but the most lively sense of these things has no tendency to change their hearts. If God can, therefore, fulfil his promise to Christ, and make his people willing to be saved, he must be able to slay the enmity of their hearts, and reconcile them to the terms of life by an act of his power.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God does, by an act of his power, make men willing to be saved, then there is an essential distinction between common and special grace. Many imagine that there is only a gradual or circumstantial difference between one act of divine grace and another. They suppose regeneration or conversion is a gradual change, and is effected entirely by clear and repeated exhibitions of divine truth to the view of sinners. Such moral suasion would indeed reconcile them to Christ, if all their opposition to him originated in the weakness or blindness of their understanding. The bare exhibition of divine truth is abundantly sufficient to remove natural ignorance and intellectual errors. But since sinners are unwilling to be saved, when they see their danger and feel their guilt, and when the way of salvation by Christ is clearly pointed out, no moral suasion, or objective light, can have the least tendency to make them willing. Though the gradual exhibition of objective light may gradually expel the darkness of their understanding, yet nothing can remove their perverse opposition to light itself, but the instantaneous and powerful operation of the divine Spirit upon their hearts. This divine operation, therefore, is special grace, and differs from common grace in two respects.

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In the first place, it makes men willing to be saved. Common grace never produces this effect. By common grace, God invites and commands men to accept of salvation, and makes them feel their obligation to submit to the terms of life. But by special grace, God actually inclines their hearts to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to them in the gospel. God usually exercises common grace toward sinners, long before he makes them the subjects of special grace. He often employs every mode of moral suasion, for a great while, before he puts forth an act of his power to make them willing to be saved. This appears in the case of Manasseh, of Saul of Tarsus, and of many others, who have been converted late in life. The highest degree of common grace leaves men unwilling to be saved; but the lowest degree of special grace makes them willing. In this respect, common and special grace essentially differ. And so they do in another respect.

For, in the second place, common grace is granted to all who enjoy the light of the gospel, while special grace is granted to none but the elect. God makes none willing to be saved but those whom he has given to Christ. He invites and commands others to embrace the gospel, and sometimes awakens them to a lively sense of their danger and guilt; but yet he never puts forth an act of his power to subdue their hearts and reconcile them to Christ. Hence that act of his power, by which he makes men willing to be saved, is properly an act of special grace, and essentially different from any act of kindness, favor, or assistance, which he bestows upon any who are finally lost.

2. If God's making men willing to be saved by an act of his power be an act of special grace, then special grace is always irresistible. It is the general representation of scripture that common grace may be resisted. God often complains of sinners for resisting the calls and invitations of his common grace. "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." Zechariah says, "They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets." Christ reproves sinners, for resisting the power and influence of common grace. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye would not.*" And Stephen, in his

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dying address to sinners in Jerusalem, plainly tells them, "Ye stiff necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, *ye do always resist the Holy Ghost;* as your fathers did, so do ye." Sinners are able to resist all the objective light afforded them, and all the external means used with them, to bring them to repentance. The reason is, all these means of light and conviction leave them in the full possession of their evil hearts of unbelief. And so long as the enmity of their hearts remains, they are able to resist all the force of moral suasion, or common grace. But when God displays his special grace upon them, he takes away the enmity of their hearts, and removes the primary cause of resistance. In the day of his power, he makes them willing to come to Christ for life; and when they are willing to come, there is nothing to prevent their coming. No sinner ever was, or ever will be unwilling to be saved, in the day of God's power. Those whom God calls by his special grace, are morally obliged to come in and partake of the gospel feast. Hence divines have usually termed this act of special grace *effectual calling*.

3. If God can make men willing to be saved by an act of his power, and if this act of his power be special grace, then special grace is as consistent with free agency as common grace. The only reason why common grace is universally supposed to be consistent with free agency is, because it leaves men free to choose and refuse, or to act just as they please. While they are the subjects of common grace only, they feel themselves at perfect liberty to choose or refuse obedience to the will of God. They can choose to read, or they can refuse to read; they can choose to pray, or they can refuse to pray; they can choose to attend public worship, or they can refuse to attend; they can choose to perform all the externals of religion, or they can refuse to perform any religious duty. But if men are perfectly free under the influence of common grace, because they are capable of choosing and refusing, then for the same reason, they must be equally free under the influence of special grace. For special grace essentially consists in making men willing to do their duty. By special grace God makes men choose to submit to Christ, and refuse to oppose him; choose to pray, and refuse to neglect it; choose to attend public worship, and refuse to neglect it; choose to walk in the ways of wisdom, and refuse to walk in the paths of the destroyer. If this be a just representation of the influence of special grace, then it certainly is as consistent with free agency as common grace. It is true, indeed, if special grace consisted, as some suppose, in giving men a new principle, faculty, or power of choosing, then it would destroy their free agency, and make

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them entirely passive in regeneration and sanctification. But if, in every act of special grace, God does nothing more than make men willing to do their duty, or to choose and refuse in a holy and virtuous manner, then it is hard to conceive how special grace does, in the least degree, infringe upon free agency. It is a dictate of common sense, that whatever makes men choose or refuse, is consistent with their liberty; and whatever obstructs or hinders them from choosing and refusing, destroys their freedom. If, therefore, either common or special grace deprived men of the power of choosing and refusing, it would destroy their free agency. But since neither common nor special grace does take away this power, it is evident that neither common nor special grace is repugnant to the freedom of the will. Indeed, we do not hesitate to say, that all who have been the subjects of special grace know, by their own experience, that they have felt as entirely free and voluntary in acting under the influence of special grace, as ever they did in acting under the influence of common grace.

4. If God can make men willing to be saved, by an act of his power, then there is a plain consistency running through the whole scheme of Calvinism. The fundamental doctrines of this system of divinity are election, total depravity, instantaneous regeneration, and the final perseverance of the saints. If the leading sentiment in this discourse be true, then all these doctrines are entirely consistent.

It is easy to see the consistency of God's choosing a certain number of mankind to eternal life, if he be able, by an act of his power, to make that certain number willing to be saved. Upon this, and upon no other ground, the doctrine of election appears to harmonize with the character of God and the freedom of the creature.

It is easy to see the consistency of God's determining the fall of man, and the total corruption of all his posterity, if he be able, by an act of his power, to remove their depravity. Though total depravity does render men unyielding to the exhibition of truth, and all the influence of moral suasion, yet it does not put them beyond the reach of special grace, which is in its own nature irresistible. Hence God foresaw no hazard to his gracious design, from the total enmity of the human heart; which he knew he was able to slay, by an act of his power, whenever he pleased.

It is easy to see the intimate connection between the doctrine of total depravity, and that of instantaneous regeneration. If special grace consists in an act of God's power, by which he makes totally depraved sinners willing to be saved, then regeneration must be an instantaneous and not a gradual change.

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There is no medium between men's being unwilling and willing to be saved; they must remain, therefore, totally unwilling to be saved, until the moment they are made willing by an instantaneous act of divine power. In regeneration, conversion, or the new creation, God acts as instantaneously as he did when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light." This must necessarily be the case, if men are totally depraved, and if nothing short of an irresistible act of divine power can remove their total depravity.

It is farthermore easy to see that the final perseverance of saints is a doctrine inseparably connected with the other doctrines of Calvinism. The same almighty Agent, who from eternity determined to renew and sanctify the elect, can as easily carry on, as he could begin, a good work in their hearts. And the same divine purpose which required their regeneration, equally requires their continued sanctification, or final perseverance in holiness. Hence there is a moral impossibility of their finally falling away, or failing of the kingdom of heaven. Thus it is easy to see, in the light of this subject, that the essential and fundamental principles of the Calvinistic system are not only consistent with each other, but that they perfectly harmonize with the character and perfections of the Deity, and with the character and nature of totally depraved creatures.

5. If what has been said in this discourse be true, then the whole scheme of Arminianism is fundamentally wrong. This system of sentiments is entirely built upon the principle of *a self determining power* in men, to embrace or to reject the terms of salvation. The advocates for this principle justly infer from it, that men are not totally depraved; that God cannot change their hearts by an act of his power; that he cannot cause them to persevere in holiness; and that he could not, consistently with their nature, choose any of them to salvation, from eternity. This scheme, it must be allowed, is very consistent with itself. But if its first principle be unscriptural and absurd, then all the doctrines which have been deduced from it have no foundation in scripture, or reason. And it plainly appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that its first principle is repugnant to the whole current of scripture. We have shown that God has given a certain number of mankind to Christ; that these, as well as the rest of the fallen race, are totally depraved; that no means or moral motives will make them willing to be saved; and that God only can make them willing, by an act of his power. If these things are true, it necessarily follows that sinners have not a self determining power, and never will be saved, unless God, by a sovereign and gracious act of his power, bows their wills to the sceptre of Christ. Those, therefore, who deny the special

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grace of God in the renovation of the heart, virtually subvert the whole gospel. For, by denying this doctrine, they put it out of their power to prove that one of mankind will be saved, or that the least good will be answered by the great work of redemption. Christ certainly died in vain, if none of mankind will be saved; and it is certain that none will be saved, if all are left to themselves, and never made willing, in the day of God's power, to embrace the offers of life. No two schemes of religious sentiments are more diametrically opposite to each other, than those of Calvinism and Arminianism. If Calvinism is scriptural, Arminianism is unscriptural; if Calvinism is fundamentally right, Arminianism is fundamentally wrong.

6. If God can make men willing to be saved by an act of his power, then we may see one reason why he usually suffers them to triumph in their wickedness, before a general revival of religion. This was God's usual conduct, under the Mosaic dispensation. We commonly read of great degeneracy and moral corruption among his people, just before any great and remarkable outpouring of the Spirit. And it appears to have been a time of deep declension, just before the revival of religion on the day of Pentecost, when the promise of the Father in the text was remarkably fulfilled. The same mode of divine conduct has been observed in these latter days. The christian history informs us that there was an uncommon prevalence of vice, irreligion, and carnal stupidity, just before the general revival of religion, about sixty years ago. Now this subject suggests one reason why God usually orders things in this manner. It is to make all men see that the revival of religion is his own work; that he can subdue the hardest hearts; that he can bow the most stubborn sinners; that though Paul plant and Apollos water, yet it his sole prerogative to give the increase. Who can deny the doctrine of special grace, or disbelieve that God is able, by an act of his power, to make men willing to be saved; when they see an uncommon revival of religion, and multitudes flocking to Christ, as doves to their windows before an impending storm? Such seasons as these are directly suited to shake the faith and hopes of those who deny the peculiar doctrines of grace. And it is becoming the only wise God to take this method to make his grace and power known, in the conversion of sinners and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

7. If God is able, by an act of his power, to make men willing to be saved, then there is a propriety in praying to him for the revival of religion and the conversion of sinners. Those who disbelieve the doctrine of special grace, and maintain that sinners are converted by moral suasion, are generally very backward in praying for a special divine influence upon the hearts of

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men. The reason is obvious. They see no propriety in praying to God that he would change the hearts of men, when they really believe it is out of his power to do it. But if it be true that God has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can, with infinite ease, bow their wills to the sceptre of Christ, then there is great propriety in praying that he would take his own work into his own hands, and fulfil his gracious promises, to Christ and to his people, concerning the prosperity of Zion. Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel prayed for the conversion of sinners in Babylon, and their prayers were heard. The apostles were incessantly praying for the outpouring of the Spirit, just before the day of Pentecost; and it was in answer to their prayers that so many were converted on that joyful occasion. And it is still the constant duty of the people of God to pray for his gracious influence upon the hearts of sinners, to draw them to Christ. God is abundantly able to pull down the kingdom of darkness, and build up the kingdom of Christ through the world. And probably he is only waiting for the fervent and united prayers of his people for this great and extensive blessing. "Ye that make mention of the Lord," therefore, "keep not silence; and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Finally, the subject which we have been considering naturally suggests a very serious question to every person: Are you pleased with the doctrine of special grace? If you only answer this question sincerely and truly, you will answer another of infinite importance; and that is, whether you are a saint or a sinner. However saints may differ in other respects, yet they all agree in this; that they are pleased with the doctrine of special grace. They have such a view of their own hearts, and of the hearts of all men, that they could not entertain any hopes of their own, or of any other person's salvation, were it not for the doctrine of special grace. All good men therefore rejoice, that God is able, by an act of his power, to form his own glorious moral image in whomsoever he pleases. But, on the other hand, however sinners may differ in other respects, they all heartily agree in this: that they dislike the doctrine of special grace. There is no sentiment more grating to their feelings, nor more destructive to their hopes. They cannot bear the thought that all men are in the hands of God, as the clay is in the hands of the potter. The best and the worst sinners in the world are here perfectly of one mind. They cannot be pleased with the absolute sovereignty of God. Let the question, then, be repeated, and let no person evade an answer. *Are you pleased with the doctrine of special grace?*

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SERMON LI.

THE NATURE OF REGENERATION.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love. — Galatians, v. 22.

Though christians generally believe that men must be born of the Spirit in order to enter into the kingdom of God, yet they are not so well agreed in respect to the nature of this new birth. Some suppose that the Spirit of God renews men by merely reforming their external conduct. Some suppose that he renews them by merely implanting a new principle of holiness in their minds, without producing any holy exercises. And some suppose that he renews them by shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts, and making them actively holy. Now this is the effect, and the only effect, which the apostle tells us the divine Spirit produces in the hearts of men, in regeneration. "The fruit of the Spirit is *love*." Love is the fulfilling of the law, the bond of perfectness, and the essence of all true holiness. As soon as the Spirit of God produces love or true benevolence in the hearts of sinners, he makes them holy as their Father who is in heaven is holy, and enstamps upon them his moral image, of which they had been totally destitute before. The true meaning of the text may be properly expressed in this general observation:

That the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces nothing but love.

I shall show,

I. That the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces nothing but love.

II. That he does produce love.

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III. That the love which he produces is the essence and source of all holy or gracious affections.

I. I am to show that the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces nothing but love.

He does, indeed, often strive with sinners, and sometimes very powerfully, without softening or subduing their hearts in the least degree. He strove a long time with that ungodly and incorrigible generation who were finally swept away by the flood. He strove with the rebellious Israelites, who perished in the wilderness. He awakened and convinced many under John's and Christ's, and the apostles' preaching, whom he never renewed or converted. And he commonly alarms the fears and awakens the consciences of those sinners whom he intends to renew, some time before he effectually changes their hearts. This he does to prepare them for regeneration, in which he forms them vessels of mercy. The only question now before us is, whether, in the act of regeneration, he produces any thing besides love. And here we may safely say that he does not produce any thing besides love in regeneration, because there is no need of his producing any other effect in that saving change. Sinners possess all the natural powers and faculties which belong to human nature, and which are necessary to constitute them moral agents, before they are made the subjects of grace. They are capable of knowing God, of understanding the gospel, and of performing every duty which is enjoined upon them by divine authority. Our Saviour said of those who had not the love of God in them, "they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Those in the state of nature stand in no need of having any new power, or faculty, or principle of action produced in them, in order to their becoming holy. They are just as capable of loving, as of hating God; and it is for this reason that he requires them to love him and forbids them to hate him, in his law, which is holy, just and good. Manasseh was as capable of doing good as of doing evil, before he was renewed; and Paul was as capable of promoting as of opposing the cause of Christ, before he was converted. This is true of all sinners, who are as much moral agents, and as proper subjects of moral government, before as after regeneration. Whenever, therefore, the divine Spirit renews, regenerates, or sanctifies them, he has no occasion of producing any thing in their minds besides love. This, indeed, he has occasion to produce, because their carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. In regard to the exercise of their minds, they need an essential change; but in regard to the powers and faculties of their minds, they need no change. All that the Spirit of God has

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to do in regeneration, is to change the hearts of sinners from sin to holiness, or from hatred to love. And I now proceed to show,

II. That love is the effect which he actually does produce in regeneration. "The fruit of the Spirit is love," says the apostle in the text. His words are very plain and emphatical. He does not say that the fruit of the Spirit is a new taste, or relish, or disposition, or principle; but is love, and nothing which is previous to it, or the foundation of it. And this representation of regeneration is agreeable to many others which we find in the New Testament, where this saving change is more clearly described than it is in the Old Testament; though even there, the circumcision of the heart is represented as the production of love. Moses tells the people that their hearts should be circumcised "to love the Lord their God." The description of the new birth, which Christ gave to Nicodemus, deserves particular attention. "Jesus said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He proceeds to say farther, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And he immediately subjoins an explanation of this divine change. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." He here sets sin and holiness in contrast; for by flesh, he means sin; and by spirit, he means holiness. When the Spirit of God renews a sinner, he enstamps his own moral image upon him, which consists in holiness; and we know that all holiness consists in love. The holiness of God consists in love; and therefore the Holy Spirit must produce love in those whom he renews and makes holy. Hence says the apostle John, "Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God." And he expresses the same idea when he says again, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." But the apostle Paul is still more explicit upon this point, in the fifth of Romans, where he asserts that he and other christians had a hope which made them not ashamed, "because the *love* of God was shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost." The nature of regeneration clearly appears from the necessity of it. The only reason why regeneration is necessary, is, because sinners are morally and totally depraved. And their total moral depravity altogether consists in selfishness. They are lovers of their own selves, and seek their own private, separate interest, in opposition to the interests of all other beings. This makes them enemies to God and to all righteousness, and disposes them to injure, and as far as they can, to destroy, all who appear to stand in the way of their selfish interests and designs.

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This total depravity renders them unfit for the kingdom of God, and incapable of enjoying the blessings of it; and to remove this disqualification for heaven, they must be regenerated, or born again. Regeneration, therefore, must consist in the production of love, or true benevolence. There is no other conceivable way in which the Spirit of God can remove their selfishness but by producing benevolence, or shedding abroad the love of God in their hearts. This will slay their enmity, reconcile them to God, unite them to Christ, and fit them for heaven. And we now appeal to all who have been born again, whether they ever experienced any other change in regeneration, than a change from selfishness to benevolence, from hatred to love, and from opposition to reconciliation to God. Scripture, reason, and experience, all concur to prove that the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produces love, and nothing but love, in the hearts of those whom he raises from spiritual death to spiritual life. It now remains to show,

III. That love, which the holy Spirit produces in regeneration, is the essence and source of all holy or gracious affections. It is generally supposed that regeneration lays the foundation of all the exercises of grace. But many maintain that this cannot be true, unless the divine Spirit produces a principle of grace which is prior to love and every other gracious exercise. But this opinion does not appear to be well founded. The love which the Spirit of God produces in regeneration, is the love of benevolence, and not the love of complacence. It is not possible, perhaps, in the nature of things, that the love of complacence should take place in the heart of any man before the love of benevolence; because he cannot see the divine beauty and excellence of benevolence, before he has felt it in his own breast. Hence benevolence will produce complacence, but complacence will not produce benevolence. But as soon as a man feels benevolence in himself, he will love benevolence and every holy affection in God, and in the friends of God. Do not many christians well remember, that when they were first regenerated, they instantaneously felt benevolently and friendly to all around them, whether friends or foes; and in consequence of that, immediately exercised peculiar love and complacency towards God, and towards all who appeared to bear his moral image? Such are the natural and genuine effects of that love of benevolence which the Spirit of God produces, in regeneration. It is the foundation, essence, and source, of all holy or gracious affections. So the apostle plainly represents it, in the text and context. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love;" that is, the love of benevolence. And the fruits or effects of this love of benevolence are, "joy, peace,

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long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." As the love of benevolence comprises all the moral perfections of the Deity, so the love of benevolence comprises all the virtuous and holy exercises which compose the christian character. Accordingly, when the divine Spirit produces the love of benevolence in the human heart, he lays a foundation for joy, peace, and every other holy affection. Benevolent love is the root, from which all holy feelings and conduct naturally spring. It produces every thing which the law requires, and which is necessary to perfect obedience. This will more fully appear, if we trace the catalogue of graces which the apostle mentions, to the source from which they flow.

From holy love proceeds holy joy. This is a branch of true benevolence. When a sinner who has been hating and opposing God, and murmuring and complaining under a painful sense of his holy and irresistible sovereignty, has holy love shed abroad in his heart, his mind is naturally filled with joy. He rejoices in the being, perfections, and government of God. He sees the earth to be full of the goodness of the Lord, and wonders why he had never before rejoiced in the displays of his glory. He is ready to call upon all around him to praise the Lord for all his astonishing goodness and grace to the children of men. Holy joy is one of the first effects which flow from that holy love, which is produced by the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

From holy love proceeds not only holy joy, but holy peace. In the exercise of divine love, the renewed sinner enjoys that peace of God which passeth all understanding. He finds peace, as well as joy, in believing. He feels at peace with God, with the friends of God, and with all mankind. He enjoys that solid and permanent peace which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot take away. I might now go on, and show how love will produce not only joy and peace, but faith, and goodness, and gentleness, and meekness, and long-suffering, and every other virtuous and amiable affection; but I will only farther observe that divine love will dispose men to pay universal obedience to the divine commands. It will dispose them to call upon God in secret, in private, and in public. It will dispose them to remember the Sabbath day, and to keep it holy. It will dispose them to seek the glory of God in whatever they do. It will dispose them to avoid every appearance of evil, and steadily pursue the path of duty. It will, in a word, make them new creatures, and cause them to walk in newness of life. Hence says the apostle, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

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Thus it appears that the Holy Spirit, in regeneration, produces that pure, holy, disinterested love, which is the source of all holiness and obedience. Though there is no natural or necessary connection between the first exercise of love and all future exercises of grace, yet there is a constituted connection, which renders future exercises of grace as certain, as if they flowed from a new nature, or holy principle, as many suppose. For those who maintain that a new nature or principle of grace is given, in regeneration, still suppose that the new nature or principle of grace is not always in exercise, and never produces any holy affections, without the special influence of the divine Spirit upon the heart. And if this were true, the certainty of a continuation of holy exercises would be no greater, on the supposition of a new principle implanted in the mind in regeneration, than on the supposition of the production of a new exercise of love. For love will no more flow from a principle of love without a divine influence, than joy, or peace, or any other gracious exercise, will flow from love without a divine influence. So that upon any supposition whatever, the continuance of grace, after regeneration, must absolutely depend upon a continued operation of the Spirit of God upon the mind of every one who has been regenerated. And this being the case, the production of love, in regeneration, must lay as solid and permanent a foundation for a holy life, as the implantation of a new principle, disposition, or moral taste, could possibly lay. When the Holy Spirit produces love in the soul in which there was nothing before but selfishness, he effects an essential change in the heart, and forms the subject of grace after the moral image of God, and prepares him for the kingdom of heaven. And this is as great and as good a change as can be produced in the human heart.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the Spirit of God produces nothing but love in regeneration, then there is no ground for the distinction which is often made between regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. They are, in nature and kind, precisely the same fruits of the Spirit. In regeneration, he produces holy exercises; in conversion, he produces holy exercises; and in sanctification, he produces holy exercises. Accordingly, the inspired writers use the terms regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, to denote the same holy and gracious affections. But systematic divines generally use them to signify very different things. They use regeneration, to denote the Spirit's operation in producing a new heart, or a new nature, or a new principle, which

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is prior to, and the foundation of, all holy exercises. They use conversion, to signify the Spirit's operation in producing love, repentance and faith; which are implied in embracing the gospel. And they use sanctification, to signify the Spirit's operation in producing all future exercises of grace. But the scripture makes no such distinction between regeneration, conversion, and sanctification. The sacred writers use these terms indiscriminately, to denote not only the first, but the subsequent effects, of the Spirit's operation upon the hearts of christians. They represent conversion and sanctification as continued regeneration, and as produced in the same manner, by a special divine influence. Paul tells the Philippians that he was confident "that he who had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Upon this ground, he exhorts the same persons to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. "For," says he, "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." He expresses the same sentiment in his prayer for the Hebrews. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ." These passages perfectly accord with the language of the text and context. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." According to the whole tenor of scripture, the Spirit of God produces all holy exercises in the hearts of saints. He first produces love, then repentance, then faith, and every other holy affection through life, until he has carried sanctification to perfection in the kingdom of glory. The terms regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, may be used to denote the distinction of *order* in the operations of the Spirit, but not to denote a distinction of *nature*, or of *manner*, in his gracious operations. He produces the same exercises of holiness, and in the same manner, in renewing, converting and sanctifying the hearts of christians. So that there is not the least foundation in scripture, reason, or experience, for the common distinction between regeneration, conversion, and sanctification.

2. If the Spirit of God in regeneration produces nothing but love, then men are no more passive in regeneration, than in conversion or sanctification. Those who hold that the divine Spirit in regeneration produces something prior to love as the foundation of it, that is, a new nature, or new principle of holiness, maintain that men are passive in regeneration, but active in conversion and sanctification. And if the Spirit of God produces something besides love in regeneration, and implants

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a new principle of action in the soul, it must be allowed that men are really passive in regeneration, and active only in conversion and sanctification. But if what has been said in this discourse be true, there is no new nature, or principle of action, produced in regeneration, but only love, which is activity itself. The first fruit of the Spirit is love, and nothing besides, prior to or different from love; and it is universally allowed that men are active in exercising love to God or man. Accordingly, the scripture requires men to be active in regeneration, conversion, and sanctification; for it requires them to be regenerated, to be converted, and to be sanctified, without suggesting the idea of passivity in respect to either of these duties. This will clearly appear from the express commands of God. Hear his command in the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy. "Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked." Hear his command in the fourth chapter of Jeremiah. "Thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it." Hear his command in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" In these commands, God requires men to be regenerated, upon pain of eternal death.

God commands men to be converted, as well as regenerated, or to become cordially reconciled to him. By Isaiah he says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." By Ezekiel he says, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" By John the Baptist he says, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." By Christ he says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel." By Peter he says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." And Paul says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." These divine precepts expressly require men to be converted.

There are other commands of God, which as plainly and expressly require men to be sanctified, as to be regenerated and converted. Among many others, the following deserve particular attention. "Be ye holy; for I am holy." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." "Grow in grace." "Add to your

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faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Let these three classes of commands be critically examined and compared, and every one must see that God as plainly and expressly requires men to be regenerated, as to be converted or sanctified. And if this be true, it necessarily follows, that men are no more passive in regeneration, than in conversion or sanctification. The truth is, men are regenerated, converted and sanctified, by the special operation of the divine Spirit, and are always equally active under his gracious influence. For it is impossible that he should produce love, or repentance, or faith, or any other gracious desire, affection, or volition, without their being active. The supposition that men are passive under the regenerating, converting, or sanctifying influence of the Spirit of God, is not only unreasonable and unscriptural, but inconsistent with every command in the Bible.

3. If the Holy Spirit, in regeneration, produces nothing but love, or holy exercises, then the regenerate are as dependent upon him for their future, as for their first, exercises of grace. Regeneration gives them no new principle, nor new power. They are no more able to act of themselves, or independently of a divine influence, than they were before they were renewed. The same divine influence is as necessary to produce the second, as the first exercise of love, the third, as the second exercise of love, and all future exercises of love, as the preceding ones. The preparations of their heart and the answer of their tongue, is continually from the Lord. He works in them both to will and to do in every duty. They are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves; but their sufficiency is of God. David freely acknowledged before God his need of divine influence, in every act of obedience. "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Jeremiah humbly said, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Solomon exhorts his son, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Every true saint can sincerely adopt the language of David, in his addresses to God from day to day. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." The more christians grow in grace and become acquainted with their own hearts, the less confidence they have in them-

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selves, and the more they realize their continual need of the sanctifying and quickening influences of the divine Spirit.

4. If the Spirit of God produces nothing but love in regeneration, then it is no more a supernatural work, on the part of God, than any other divine operation upon the minds of men. The Spirit of God has always produced holy love in the hearts of the angels of light; but who can suppose that this is a supernatural or miraculous operation? The Spirit of God produced holy love in the hearts of our first parents before they apostatized; but who can suppose that he operated supernaturally or miraculously upon their minds? There is nothing more supernatural or miraculous, in the divine Spirit's producing holy love in those who have been once destitute of it, than in producing the same holy affection in those who have never been sinful. In regenerating a sinner, the Spirit does not counteract any law of nature, nor produce any miraculous effect. He did operate supernaturally, when he gave to one the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to another the gifts of healing, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these were supernatural effects, produced in a supernatural manner. But the working in men both to will and to do what is right, is no supernatural effect, and no other than what he has done for nearly six thousand years together. It is true, indeed, that regeneration, conversion and sanctification are all produced by the *special* operations of the Spirit. They may be called *special*, because he renews, converts and sanctifies some, and not others; and because, in regeneration, conversion and sanctification, he produces those gracious affections which are not common to mankind. There is reason to believe that the speaking of regeneration, conversion, or sanctification, as a supernatural work, has led many to draw a very false and dangerous consequence from it. How many have hence inferred that sinners are under a natural inability to love God, repent of sin, believe the gospel, and obey, from the heart, any of the divine commands. It is difficult to see why this inference is not just, if regeneration, conversion, or sanctification, is owing to a supernatural operation of the Spirit. For who has a natural ability to work miracles? And who can be properly required to make him a new heart, repent of sin, believe the gospel, and obey every divine command, before he is the subject of the supernatural and miraculous influences of the divine Spirit, if these are necessary to enable him to put forth such holy exercises? Those who preach that regeneration, conversion and sanctification, are produced by the *supernatural* power of the Holy Ghost, put an excuse into

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the mouths of sinners which it is extremely difficult, and even impossible to take away. This ought to teach teachers to use a more proper and scriptural language, in treating upon this solemn subject.

5. If the Spirit of God produces nothing but love, in regeneration, then sinners have no more excuse for not beginning to love God, than saints have for not continuing to love him. Saints can no more *continue* to love God without a divine influence, than sinners can *begin* to love God without a divine influence. They are both equally and constantly dependent upon a divine influence, to do their duty. But who will say that saints have any excuse for not keeping themselves in the love of God, and being steadfast and unmovable in the performance of every duty, because God must work in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure? But if saints have no excuse for the neglect of duty, then sinners have none. They cannot plead that they are any more dependent upon divine influence, in order to love God, repent, believe the gospel, and obey the divine commands, than saints are. They need no other principle, power, or ability to do all that God requires, than what they naturally possess. It is true they need a divine influence, and so do saints. Nothing but their hating God prevents their loving him, and they are just as able to love him as they are to hate him. They must be, therefore, as totally inexcusable and self condemned for not loving and serving God, as the best saints on earth are for neglecting any duty. The divine commands lie upon them in their full force, to make them a new heart, to repent of sin and to believe the gospel, without delay.

Finally, this subject teaches us that the true, scriptural doctrine of regeneration, conversion and sanctification, which all mean the same thing, is perfectly consistent with all the commands which God has given to saints and to sinners. If regeneration does not consist in any new principle of action, but only in the production of holy and benevolent exercises, then God may consistently require saints to love him constantly and perfectly, and he may consistently require sinners to love him as constantly and perfectly as saints. He may, with propriety, give the same commands to both. Though love is of God, and is the fruit of the Spirit, yet both saints and sinners are bound to love God with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength; and this obligation will lie upon them in its full weight through eternity. It is an obligation which is founded in the nature of things, and which cannot be dissolved, so long as God remains supremely amiable, and they remain capable of loving him with supreme affection.

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SERMON LII.

THE DUTY OF SINNERS TO MAKE THEMSELVES A NEW HEART.

And make you a new heart and a new spirit. — Ezekiel, xviii. 31.

The Jews were now under the correcting hand of God in Babylon; but instead of accepting the punishment of their iniquities and ascribing righteousness to their Maker, they bitterly complained of the severity and injustice of his conduct. They said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." God knew they meant to insinuate that he was punishing them, not for their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers, which he solemnly declares to be a false and absurd insinuation. "As I live saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son." But still they objected, "the way of the Lord is not equal." God now appealed from their reason to their conscience, and demanded, "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God; repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Here sinners are expressly required to make them a new heart, as well as to repent and turn

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from all iniquity. The plain and important truth, therefore, which properly falls under our present consideration, is this:

It is the duty of sinners to make them a new heart.

I shall endeavor to show,

I. What a new heart is,

II. What it is to make a new heart.

III. That this is the duty of sinners.

The nature of this subject requires a careful and candid attention, especially the first two branches of it, upon which a clear understanding of the whole depends. For if we can ascertain what a new heart is, and what it is to make a new heart, the proof of the doctrine will be easy, and the whole discourse plain and intelligible to every capacity.

1. Let us consider what a new heart is.

Though a new heart be a scripture phrase, and in common use, yet different men attach very different ideas to it; and for this reason I shall proceed gradually in explaining it, and mention some things which it cannot mean.

There is no ground to suppose that it means any new natural power or faculty of the soul, which is necessary to render sinners capable of understanding and doing their duty. They are as completely moral agents as saints, and as completely capable, in point of natural ability, of understanding and obeying the will of God. He knew that those whom he addressed in the text, and required to make them a new heart, were possessed of reason, conscience, and every other natural faculty of the mind; and upon this ground alone, he made that solemn appeal to them in a preceding verse, "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" Since God appeals to sinners as moral agents, we cannot suppose that the new heart which he requires them to make is any natural power or faculty of mind, which they do not need, and which, if they did need, they could be under no obligation to obtain.

Nor can a new heart mean any new natural appetite, instinct, or passion. Whatever belongs to our mere animal nature, belongs to sinners as well as to saints. And when sinners become saints, they experience no change in their natural appetites, or animal propensities; but a new heart commonly serves to weaken and restrain, instead of increasing or strengthening such sensibilities as are destitute of every moral quality.

Nor can a new heart mean any dormant, inactive principle in the mind, which is often supposed to be the foundation of all virtuous or holy exercises. Such a principle appears to be a mere creature of the imagination; but supposing it really exists, what valuable purpose can it serve? Can a dormant principle, which is destitute of all perception and sensibility, produce love,

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penitence, faith, hope, joy, and the whole train of christian graces? We may as easily conceive that all holy affections should spring from that piece of flesh which is literally called the heart, as to conceive that they should spring from any principle devoid of activity. A new heart, therefore, cannot mean a new principle, taste, relish, or disposition, which is prior to, or the foundation of, all holy affections or gracious exercises.

This leads me to say positively, that a new heart consists in gracious exercises themselves; which are called new, because they never existed in the sinner before he became a new creature, or turned from sin to holiness. This will appear to be a just and scriptural explanation of a new heart, from various considerations.

In the first place, the new heart must be something which is morally good, and directly opposite to the old heart, which is morally evil. But there is nothing belonging to the mind that is either morally good, or morally evil, which does not consist in free, voluntary exercises. Supposing there is a dormant principle in the soul, which lies at the bottom of all voluntary exercises, yet so long as it lies dormant and inactive, there can be no moral quality belonging to it. And, indeed, if it should really produce moral exercises, still all moral good or evil would lie in the exercises themselves, and not in the principle. There can be no moral good or moral evil, in any thing belonging to the mind, which has no perception and activity. Accordingly, we never praise or blame any person for any property he possesses, or any motive he puts forth, or any thing in him or about him in which he is totally inactive and involuntary. The new heart, therefore, which must be allowed to be morally good, must consist in free, holy, voluntary exercises, and not in any thing whatever which is supposed to be prior to them, or the foundation of them.

This will farther appear, if we consider, in the next place, that the divine law requires nothing but love, which is a free, voluntary exercise. The first and great commandment requires us to love God with all our heart; and the second commandment requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. God requires love, and nothing but love, in every precept and prohibition he has given us in his word. But we know that love is a free, voluntary exercise, and not any taste, habit, or principle, which is totally inactive and involuntary. It is absurd to suppose that God would require any thing of us in which we are altogether passive, because this would be to require us to do nothing. Hence the new heart required in the text must consist in activity, or the free, voluntary exercise of true benevolence, which comprises every holy and virtuous affection.

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And this, I would farther observe, is agreeable to the experience of all who repent, and turn from their transgressions, and make them a new heart and a new spirit. The change which they experience is merely a moral change. They find no alteration in their intellectual powers or speculative knowledge, but only in their moral exercises. They are sensible that old things have passed away, and all things become new in their affections. They exercise such love to God, such hatred of sin, such faith in Christ, and such delight in the duties of devotion, as they never exercised before. Thus it appears from the united evidence of reason, scripture, and experience, that a new heart consists in nothing but new, holy, voluntary exercises of the mind. If this be a just explanation of a new heart, it will be easy to see,

II. What it is to make a new heart.

If a new heart consisted in a new principle or natural faculty, it would be difficult to see how a sinner could make him a new heart, without exerting almighty power or performing an act of creation; which is absolutely impossible. But if, as we have seen, a new heart wholly consists in new holy affections, then all the sinner has to do to make him a new heart, is to exercise benevolence instead of selfishness, or to put forth holy instead of unholy exercises. The precept in the text which requires sinners to make them a new heart, means no more nor less, than their turning from sin to holiness, or exercising that pure and holy love which the divine law requires. To make a new heart in this sense, is agreeable to the common apprehension and the common language of mankind. It is very common for one person to say to another, make yourself easy, or make yourself contented; that is, alter your mind, change your heart, exercise totally different affections from what you have at present. And there are many other familiar expressions, which convey the same idea; such as these in particular, Be kind — Be careful — Be sober — Be honest — Be generous — Be friendly. Every person knows when he is addressed in this form, that he is required to exercise proper, instead of improper affections, or to exercise benevolence instead of selfishness. And since the divine commands run in the same form, they are to be understood in the same sense. When God says, Be sober — Be vigilant — Be humble — Be obedient — Be holy — Be perfect — he means that men should put forth truly pious and holy affections. And so far as these and other divine precepts respect sinners, they require the exercise of the same affections, only with this peculiar circumstance, that they are *new*, or such as they never exercised before. There is no command given to sinners more plain and intelligible, than the

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command to make them a new heart. It does not mean that they should *create* any new powers or faculties, or lay any new foundation for holy exercises; but only that they should exercise love, faith, repentance, and all the gracious affections to which the promise of pardon and salvation are made. As the new heart consists in nothing but new holy affections, so the making of a new heart consists in nothing but exercising such new holy affections. The way is now sufficiently prepared to show,

III. That it is the duty of sinners to make them a new heart.

1. The mere light of nature teaches that every person ought to exercise universal benevolence. This duty results from the nature of things. Every intelligent creature is capable of knowing the difference between moral good, and moral evil, and this knowledge lays him under moral obligation to exercise true benevolence towards all proper objects of it. God is supremely excellent, and sinners are capable of seeing his great and amiable character, which they are bound to love supremely. All who know God are under indispensable obligations to glorify him as God. Sinners are as capable of knowing God as saints, and are under the same obligations to love him, notwithstanding the native depravity of their hearts. Their depravity wholly consists in selfish affections, which do not destroy either their capacity, or obligation, to exercise holy and benevolent affections. Though sinners have hated God, rejected the gospel, and lived in the exercise of perfect selfishness, in time past, yet this is no reason why they should not immediately love God, embrace the gospel, and live in the exercise of true benevolence, in time to come. It is just as easy for them to put forth benevolent exercises, as if they had never had a selfish one; and their obligation to exercise benevolent affections is as great as if they never had been in the least degree selfish. The reason is, their obligation to exercise benevolence arises from the nature of things, or from their being free, moral agents. Though the Algerines are mere pagans, and destitute of the light of divine revelation, yet they have no right to treat their prisoners of war with malevolence and cruelty. Neither their native depravity, nor their ignorance of the Bible, excuses them for their malevolent and inhuman conduct towards those who fall into their hands. They ought to exercise benevolence instead of malevolence, or make them new hearts. The mere light of nature lays them under moral obligation to put away their hard, cruel, malignant hearts, and become kind, tender, and benevolent towards all nations. And surely sinners under the gospel are no less obliged, by the nature of things, to put away all their selfish affections, and exercise universal benevo-

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lence, or immediately to turn from sin to holiness. It is just as easy for a sinner to begin to love God, as to continue to love him after he has loved him once; and it is just as easy both to begin and to continue to love God, as to continue to hate him. And for the same reason that he ought not to continue to hate God, he ought immediately to love him; or to put away his old heart of hatred, and make him a new heart of love.

2. God, who perfectly knows the state and characters of sinners, repeatedly commands them to make them a new heart. He commands them to change their hearts, both explicitly and implicitly, in various forms, and in a multitude of places. In the verse which contains our text, he says in plain terms, "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a *new heart* and a *new spirit*." We find a similar command in the tenth of Deuteronomy: "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked." This same command is repeated in nearly the same expressions in the fourth of Jeremiah: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart." "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Nothing less than the making of a new heart is required in this passage of James: "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and *purify your hearts*, ye double minded." In these passages, God explicitly commands sinners to make them a new heart; and he implicitly requires the same thing in every other command he has given them in his word. When God commands them to love him with all their hearts, and their neighbor as themselves; or when he commands them to repent, to believe, to submit, to pray, to rejoice, or to do any thing else; he implicitly commands them to make them a new heart, or to exercise holy instead of unholy affections. And for sinners to exercise holy affections, is to exercise the new affections in which a new heart consists. Thus it appears that sinners, notwithstanding their total depravity, are capable of making a new heart, and are commanded to make a new heart; and of consequence that it is their first and indispensable duty to make them a new heart. Every argument that can be adduced to prove that they ought to do any duty, will equally prove that they ought to do this first duty of all.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the making of a new heart consists in the exercising of holy instead of unholy affections, then sinners are not *passive*, but *active* in regeneration. It has been the common opinion

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of Calvinists, that a new heart consists in a new taste, disposition or principle, which is prior to, and the foundation of all holy exercises. And this idea of a new heart has led them to suppose that sinners are entirely passive in regeneration. But if a new heart consists in new holy exercises, then sinners may be as active in regeneration as in conversion. Though it be true that the divine agency is concerned in the renovation of the heart, yet this does by no means destroy the activity of sinners. Their activity in all cases is owing to a divine operation upon their minds. In God they live, and move, and have their being. They are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves, but their sufficiency is of God. He always works in them both to will and to do, in all their free and voluntary exercises. When the inspired writers mention only the divine agency in regeneration, and represent men as "born of the Spirit," "created anew in Christ Jesus," and "raised from the dead by the mighty power of God," they do not mean to exclude the activity of the subjects of this saving change. They may act while they are acted upon, in regeneration as well as in sanctification. It is generally allowed that sanctification is the work of God's Spirit, and at the same time it is supposed that saints are active in the growth of grace, or perseverance in holiness. Indeed, it is expressly said that God, who begins, carries on the good work in the hearts of believers. But if saints can act freely under a divine influence in sanctification, why cannot sinners act freely under a divine influence in regeneration? The cases are perfectly similar, and are so represented in the word of truth. Sinners are required to make them a new heart, and saints are required to keep themselves in the love of God. But there could be no propriety in these commands to saints, nor to sinners, if they must be *passive* in becoming and continuing holy. Every command given to either saints or sinners, requires them to be *active*, not passive, in obeying the command. And since God requires sinners to make them a new heart, as well as saints to grow in grace, it is just as certain that sinners are active in regeneration, as that saints are active in sanctification; and it is just as certain that both saints and sinners are active under the sanctifying and renewing influence of the divine Spirit, as that the divine commands are holy, just and good.

2. If sinners are free and voluntary in making them a new heart, then regeneration is not a miraculous or supernatural work. Even were it true that, on God's part, regeneration is the production of a new nature, disposition or principle in the human mind, still it would not be a miraculous or supernatural operation, according to the common acceptation of the phrase.

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But since in regeneration God does not create any new nature, disposition or principle of action, but only works in men holy and benevolent exercises, in which they are completely free and active; there is a plain absurdity in calling the renovation of the heart a miraculous or supernatural change. This is carrying the *passivity* of the creature in regeneration to an extravagant height, and so as to destroy all obligation of sinners to do the least duty, until a miracle has been wrought upon them. How this is consistent with that distinction between natural and moral inability, which has been so clearly stated and strongly supported by a very acute and eminent divine, I can by no means conceive. I believe it was never said by them of old time, that regeneration is a miracle, though they did say it is the production of a new nature, disposition, or principle of action. And in saying this, they set the doctrine of regeneration in direct opposition to all the divine commands, invitations and threatenings to sinners. It is certain, however, that sinners understand them in this light, and charge them with a palpable contradiction in their discourses upon passive regeneration, in which they exhort men to immediate repentance, faith, and new obedience. And perhaps it is beyond the power of man to reconcile the passivity of sinners in regeneration with their immediate duty to repent, to believe, or to do any thing else, in a holy and acceptable manner. But the doctrine of active regeneration is perfectly consistent with all that the gospel requires, or promises, or threatens, in respect to sinners, and approves itself to their reason and conscience in the sight of God. It is, therefore, a matter of serious importance, that the true doctrine respecting the new heart should be exhibited in a plain scriptural light, and so as to convince sinners that there is nothing but their free, voluntary, selfish affections, which prevents their immediately embracing the gospel, and securing the salvation of their souls.

3. If it be a duty which God enjoins upon sinners, and which they are able to perform, to make them a new heart, then there is no more difficulty in preaching the gospel to sinners, than to saints. Those ministers who hold to passive regeneration, and maintain that sinners neither can, nor ought to make them a new heart, always find great difficulties in applying their discourses to the unregenerate. They feel constrained, either to omit exhorting sinners to any duty, or to exhort them to wait for a new heart, or to exhort them to seek for a new heart, or to exhort them to make them a new heart. They find a difficulty in exhorting them to make them a new heart, because they expressly tell them that they cannot do it. They find a difficulty in exhorting them to seek for a new heart with

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their old heart of enmity and unbelief, because this is exhorting them to continue in sin, and actually joining with them in their rebellion against God. And they find a difficulty in exhorting them to stand still and do nothing, because this is contrary to every dictate of reason and scripture. What, then, to say to sinners, consistently with truth and consistently with their own opinion that they cannot and ought not to make them a new heart, they are totally at a loss. Pressed with these evils on every side, they commonly, of late, choose what they deem the least; that is, to neglect preaching the gospel to sinners. The essence of preaching the gospel to sinners, consists in urging and exhorting them to the duty of immediate repentance and faith. So John the Baptist preached. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." So Christ preached, after his forerunner. "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, Repent ye and believe the gospel." After Christ had finished his ministry, he commanded his apostles and their successors to preach the gospel in the same manner as he did. "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Paul and the other apostles obeyed his command, and said plainly to sinners, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God." Do not many ministers at the present day neglect to follow the example of Christ and the apostles, and totally omit exhorting sinners to repent and believe the gospel? If we look into the late publications of some very eminent divines,* shall we find a single exhortation to sinners to become reconciled to God, to give God their hearts, to repent, to submit, or to do any thing whatever in a holy and benevolent manner? Such a want of conformity to the divine standard of preaching is undoubtedly owing, in all cases, to a belief that sinners are passive in regeneration, and cannot make them a new heart. Let ministers, therefore, only renounce the false notion of passivity in regeneration, and they will find no more difficulty in exhorting sinners, than in exhorting saints, to do their duty. They will see the same propriety in exhorting sinners to make them a new heart, or to repent and believe immediately, as in exhorting saints to grow in grace, and to perfect holiness in the

* Dr. Smalley and Dr. Strong.

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fear of God. And such preaching will approve itself to the consciences of both saints and sinners.

4. Since it is the duty of sinners to make them a new heart, they have no excuse for the neglect of any other duty. When they are urged to love God, repent of sin, believe the gospel, make a public profession of religion, or to do any thing in a holy and acceptable manner, they are always ready to excuse themselves for their negligence, by pleading their inability to change their hearts. This they say is the work of God; and until he pleases to appear for them, and take away their stony hearts and give them hearts of flesh, they cannot internally obey any of his commands, and therefore must be excused for all their delays, neglects, and deficiencies in duty. But if it be their duty, in the first instance, to make them a new heart, then, according to their own plea, they have no excuse for neglecting any other act of obedience to the divine commands. If it were their duty to *begin*, they acknowledge it would be their duty to *persevere* in obedience; and by acknowledging this, they virtually give up every excuse, and become self condemned for all their internal as well as external transgressions of the divine law. The moment they feel the propriety and force of the precept in the text, "to make them a new heart and a new spirit," their mouths are stopped, and they stand guilty and inexcusable before God. As soon as this commandment comes, sin revives, and they die. They find that they cannot love God merely because they hate him, and that they hate him without a cause, which is their criminality, not their excuse.

5. If sinners ought to make them a new heart, then it must be their own fault, if they finally perish. They will have no right to plead that God did not do enough for them, but must for ever own and feel that they did not do enough for themselves. They cannot be lost if they only do their duty, and make them a new heart. But if they finally neglect this duty, they will justly expose themselves to eternal death. Hence God solemnly reminds them that their future happiness or misery depends upon their choice; and that if they perish, it must be wholly owing to their own folly and guilt. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

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SERMON LIII.

THE TREASURES OF A GOOD AND EVIL HEART.

A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. — Matt. xii. 35.

It was never our Saviour's intention to preach against Moses and the prophets, but only to explain their writings, and take off the false glosses which were put upon them by false teachers. Though these men adopted the language of the inspired writers, and acknowledged the distinction between saints and sinners, yet they had no idea of what constituted this distinction. They ignorantly supposed that the precepts and prohibitions of the divine law had no respect to the heart, but only to external actions. And hence they denominated men either good or bad, saints or sinners, according to their outward appearance, rather than according to their internal views and feelings. But our Saviour represented this notion as a great and essential error. He said to his hearers, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And after this, he told the scribes and Pharisees themselves, that their righteousness was no better than hypocrisy, because it wholly consisted in mere external obedience. "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." But as Christ meant to instruct the ignorant, as well as refute the erroneous, he clearly described the essential distinction between a good man and a bad man, and expressly asserted that this distinction lies in the heart, which stamps the moral quality of all

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the actions that proceed from it. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." This, like many other figurative expressions of Christ, has often been misunderstood and misapplied. It has frequently been employed in favor of a sentiment, which appears totally inconsistent with that very distinction between saints and sinners which Christ plainly intended to assert. In order, therefore, to investigate and establish the important truths which our Lord meant to convey in this passage, I shall endeavor,

I. To describe the good treasure of the heart.

II. To describe the evil treasure of the heart.

III. To make it appear that it is the treasure of the heart which justly denominates men either good or evil.

I. I am to describe the good treasure of the heart.

The whole of this good treasure summarily consists in general benevolence. Our Saviour comprises all true virtue, holiness, or moral goodness, in love to God and man. When he was asked, Which is the great commandment in the law? he said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." According to this infallible exposition of the law, it requires nothing morally good but what partakes of the nature of pure, disinterested benevolence. The question now is, Why does Christ call this benevolence, which comprises all moral goodness, a good treasure? Treasure is a general name for abundance; and Christ uses the term in this sense, in the verse immediately preceding the text, where he says, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But what abundance, or what treasure, can there be in a good heart, which consists in love? Is not love perfectly pure, simple and uncompounded? How then can there be any propriety in calling it a treasure, which generally comprises both a variety and a multiplicity of things? It is easy, however to discover the propriety of this expression. Though true love be of a simple uncompounded nature, yet it is capable of spreading into a variety of branches, which, taken all together, form a rich treasure of moral goodness. I will now lay open as clearly and distinctly as I can, all the parts or parcels of the good treasure of the good heart.

1. A good heart contains good *affections*.

It is always more or less affected by every object presented to it. If a proper object of benevolence be presented to it, it feels benevolence. If a proper object of complacence be pre-

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sented, it feels complacence. If a proper object of gratitude be presented, it feels gratitude. If a vile and odious object be presented, it feels a proper displeasure, hatred, or aversion. These inward motions or exercises of the good heart, which are excited by the mere perception of objects, and which do not produce any external actions, are properly called *affections*, in distinction from all other emotions and exercises of the heart, which influence to action. And these immanent affections of the good heart are extremely numerous, because they are perpetually arising in the mind, whether the person be sitting, or walking, or speaking, or reading, or merely thinking. The good heart is often as deeply and sensibly affected by invisible, as by visible objects. Some of the purest and best affections of the good heart are put forth in the view of the character, perfections and designs of the Deity, and while the mind is intensely employed in contemplating things past, present, and to come. Such holy and virtuous affections compose the largest portion of the good treasure of the good heart.

2. The good heart contains good *desires*. These naturally flow from true benevolence, in the view of any absent and distant good. The man of a good heart extends his good desires as far as his knowledge extends. He desires that God may be glorified, and that his creatures may be happy. He desires to do good to himself, and where his ability or opportunity of doing good fails, he desires that God would enable and dispose others to do good. Whenever he sees any attainable good, he sincerely desires that it may be obtained. Were his views as extensive as the views of the Deity, his benevolent desires would be equally extensive. But though his desires are bounded by the scantiness of his knowledge, yet they are very numerous and perfectly virtuous, and comprise a good share of the good treasure of his heart.

3. The good heart contains good *intentions*. It not only desires good to be done, but actually intends to do good. David had a good intention, when it was in his heart to build a house for the honor and worship of God. The desires of doing good, are different from the intentions of doing good. Good men may desire to do many things which they do not intend to do; and they may intend to do many things which they never do. Some carry their intentions of doing good much farther forward than others. They intend to do many things for the benefit of individuals and the public, in days, and months, and years to come. But very often they never find an opportunity, or a disposition, to carry all their good intentions into execution. Paul tells us, that he failed of fulfilling his good intentions. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is

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good, I find not." It is true, however that the failure of good men in fulfilling their good intentions, only proves their great imperfection or inconstancy in goodness. For their good intentions, whether they act agreeably to them or not, are good in their own nature, and belong to the good treasure of their hearts.

4. The good heart contains good *volitions*. These are imperative acts of the will, and have immediate influence upon external conduct. Neither good affections, nor good desires, nor good intentions, are inseparably connected with bodily exertions. But volitions are the next, immediate, and efficient cause of external action. When we put forth any bodily effort, we are conscious of a will or volition to move or speak. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." A good heart will naturally produce good volitions, which are the immediate natural cause of good actions. It is in this sense, that "a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." Good volitions always go before good actions, because these derive all their moral quality from the volitions, from which they originate. If a man's hand or body moves without his own volition, that motion is not his action, and has no moral quality attached to it. All actions are voluntary motions, and take their moral quality from the nature of the volitions, which gave them existence. Holy and virtuous volitions render all the actions proceeding from them truly holy and virtuous. Such volitions, therefore, are to be numbered among the other good treasures of the heart. And lest it should be deemed an omission, I will add,

5. That the good heart contains good *passions*. These are, however, precisely the same as good affections, only raised to a higher degree. When any good affections rise to such a degree as to excite great sensibility of body or mind, they are then commonly denominated *passions*. Holy love may rise to admiration, hope, fear, joy, sorrow, grief, pity, compassion, indignation, anger, wrath, and even vengeance. Though God never admires, nor hopes, nor fears, yet he exercises joy, sorrow, grief, pity, compassion, indignation, wrath, anger, and holy vengeance. And all, or nearly all these holy passions Christ felt and expressed while he tabernacled in the flesh. He rejoiced, he grieved, he wept, and from time to time manifested pity, compassion, indignation, wrath and anger. Holy passions flow from holy affections; or in other words, holy affections, under certain circumstances, will naturally rise to holy passions.

I have now enumerated all the parts or parcels of the good heart. But you will observe, that I have not mentioned *appe-*

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tites as belonging to the good treasure. The reason is, they do not flow from the heart, nor stand connected with any class of moral exercises. There is nothing morally good or evil in hunger, thirst, or any natural taste. This does not depend upon a good or bad heart, but upon the constitution and state of the body. But good affections, good desires, good intentions, good volitions, and good passions, are all of a moral and virtuous nature, and belong to the good treasure of the heart.

II. Let us inquire what is to be understood by the evil treasure of the evil heart. If the good treasure of the good heart has been properly described, it will be easy to discover what is the evil treasure of the evil heart. It must be something directly opposite to the good treasure. As the good treasure consists in benevolence, so the evil treasure must consist in selfishness. And this selfishness naturally branches out into evil affections, evil desires, evil intentions, evil volitions, and evil passions. There is no moral evil but what may be found in one or other of these moral exercises, which contain all the treasures of wickedness in any wicked heart. The good heart and evil heart are both made up of exercises; but their exercises, whether affections, desires, intentions, volitions, or passions, are diametrically opposite in their moral quality. The good treasure of the good heart consists in the various modifications of benevolence, but the evil treasure of the evil heart consists in the various modifications of selfishness.

It only remains to show,

III. That men are either good or evil, according to the good or evil treasure of the heart. This truth lies upon the very face of the text. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." The good treasure of the heart, which consists in good exercises, constitutes a good man; and the evil treasure of the heart, which consists in evil exercises, constitutes an evil man. The truth of this important point will clearly appear from various considerations.

1. Every man forms his opinion of himself, by the exercises of his heart. If a man be conscious of having good affections, good desires, good intentions, and good volitions and passions, he naturally forms a good opinion of himself, and believes that all the world would form the same opinion of him, if they could look into his heart, and see what passes there. But if, on the other hand, a man be conscious of having evil affections, desires, designs and passions, he is constrained to condemn himself, and to believe that every body would condemn him, if they could only discover the real exercises of his heart. Men may, indeed, judge amiss, respecting the good or bad treasure

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of their hearts, but still they are constrained to form their opinion of themselves, by this, and by no other criterion. They cannot believe themselves to be good, while they are conscious that their hearts are bad; nor can they believe themselves to be bad, while they are conscious that their hearts are good. No person presumes to judge of his own moral character, by his abilities, or by his professions, or by his external conduct; but by the exercises of his heart. This must be a convincing evidence to every individual, that it is the heart alone, which forms and stamps every moral character.

2. It is the dictate of common sense, that nothing can properly denominate men either morally good or morally evil, but that in which they are really active. They may be constrained to see, and hear, and feel, and taste, and even to remember and judge; and, in all such cases, they are neither active, nor accountable. But they are never compelled to love or hate, to choose or refuse, to rejoice or mourn, to hope or fear, to forgive or revenge. In all their affections, desires, intentions, volitions and passions, they are altogether active, and justly deserve either praise or blame. As all their agency lies in their hearts, so their hearts alone render them morally good or morally evil. This is agreeable to the common sense of mankind in all cases in which they have an opportunity to judge. Let a man be accused for any of his conduct; if he can only make it appear that he acted from a good intention, he will be justified and approved. Or let a man be commended for any of his conduct, if afterwards it appears that he acted from a bad intention or design, he will be universally condemned rather than applauded. All mankind judge alike upon this subject, and either praise or blame each other for the goodness or badness of their hearts, in which their moral agency entirely consists.

3. The whole current of scripture confirms the point under consideration. Solomon says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." That is, his heart forms his moral character, and constitutes him a good or bad man. And our Saviour himself says, "The light of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." By a single eye he means a good heart, and by an evil eye an evil heart. In a word, he means to assert, in the strongest and most striking language, that a good heart makes a good man, and a bad heart makes a bad man. This truth is too plain to need any farther illustration or proof. It is not only agreeable to scripture and common sense, but it is founded in the very nature of things. Even the Deity cannot constitute any other standard of moral character, than that of the good and bad

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treasure of the heart. The man of a holy heart must necessarily be a holy man, and the man of an unholy heart must necessarily be an unholy man. This is the only essential distinction that can exist between a saint and a sinner.

Now the subject which we have been considering, may serve to throw light upon some important points, which need to be better understood than they commonly are.

1. What has been said may serve to give us a clear and just idea of the heart. Some suppose that the heart is something distinct, not only from perception, reason and conscience, but also from all moral exercises. When they undertake to define the heart, which is very seldom, they sometimes call it a faculty, sometimes a principle, and more frequently a taste; but whether they call it by one or other of these names, they agree in maintaining that it is something wholly distinct from all moral exercises, and the source from which they all proceed. But it appears from what has been said in this discourse, that the heart is so far from being a moral faculty, principle, or taste, and the foundation of moral exercises, that it wholly consists of moral affections, desires, intentions, volitions and passions. These are the good and evil treasure, which compose the good and evil heart, and produce every good and evil action. This is representing the heart in the same light in which our Saviour represents it in the text. He represents the heart as the immediate source of external actions. But if the heart be a faculty, principle, or taste, prior to, and distinct from all affections, desires, volitions and passions, then it cannot be the next immediate cause or source of external actions. These immediately proceed from moral exercises, and not from a dormant, inactive principle, taste, or faculty. The scripture gives us no account of any heart but what consists in the various exercises or modifications of benevolence, or selfishness. Nor is any other heart either necessary, or even conceivable. No other heart is necessary in order to men's doing good or evil. Perception, reason and conscience, are all the natural faculties necessary to constitute a moral agent. These form a capacity for loving and hating, choosing and refusing, acting and neglecting to act. There is no occasion for a distinct faculty of will, as has been generally supposed, in order to put forth external actions, or internal exercises. Though the natural faculties of perception, reason and conscience are necessary to form a capacity, and to lay men under moral obligation to exercise right affections, desires, intentions, volitions and passions; yet these moral exercises do not spring from, or grow out of, any or all of those natural faculties. It is God who worketh in men both to will and to do. Moral exercises flow from a divine

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operation upon the mind of a moral agent, and not from any natural faculty, principle, or taste, enabling him to originate his own internal exercises, or external actions. And as no other heart than that which consists in moral exercises is necessary, in order to men's doing good or evil, so no other heart is conceivable. Take away all affections, desires, intentions, volitions and passions from the mind, and there will be no heart left, nor any thing which can deserve either praise or blame. What we call the heart, what the divine law requires or forbids, and what we approve or condemn in ourselves or others, wholly consists in benevolent or selfish exercises. If we search every corner of the human mind, we can find no heart, worthy of praise or blame, but what is composed of good or evil affections, desires, intentions and volitions. A good heart is a good treasure of good exercises; and an evil heart is an evil treasure of evil exercises. And every man in the world is conscious of having such a good, or such an evil heart; which creates self approbation, or self condemnation.

2. This subject teaches us that neither a good nor evil heart can be transmitted, or derived from one person to another. Adam could no more convey his good or evil heart to his posterity, than he could convey his good or evil actions to them. Nothing can be more repugnant to scripture, reason and experience, than the notion of our deriving a corrupt heart from our first parents. If we have a corrupt heart, as undoubtedly we have, it is altogether our own, and consists in evil affections and other evil exercises, and not in any moral stain, pollution, or depravity derived from Adam. This clearly appears from the very essence of an evil heart, which consists in evil exercises, and not in any thing prior to, distinct from, or productive of, evil emotions or affections. The absurd idea of imputed and derived depravity, originated from the absurd idea of the human heart, as being a principle, propensity, or taste, distinct from all moral exercises. But since every man's corrupt heart is his own, and consists in his own free and voluntary exercises, he ought to repent, and look to God for pardoning mercy. And unless he does this, he must perish; for God has said, the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, but the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

3. This subject teaches us that religion wholly consists in good affections. It is generally supposed that religion partly consists in a good heart, and partly in the good affections or holy exercises which flow from the heart. This seems to have been President Edwards' opinion; who, in his "Treatise on the Affections," expressly says that religion *chiefly* consists in affections. It appears that he was led into this opinion, by

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supposing that a good heart is a good taste, or good principle, which lays a foundation for good affections or holy exercises. But if the leading sentiment in this discourse be true, there is no ground to suppose that a good heart consists in a good taste, or a good principle, or in any thing besides good affections. It is undoubtedly true, that all virtue, piety, or moral goodness, consists in a holy or benevolent heart. But according to scripture and experience, a holy or benevolent heart altogether consists in holy or benevolent affections. These comprise all good exercises, desires, intentions, volitions and passions, which are the sum and comprehension of all true religion and vital piety.

4. This subject teaches us that the passions belong to the heart, and consequently are all either morally good, or morally evil. Since they are only the affections carried to a high degree of sensibility, they must partake of the nature of the affections from which they arise. Those which arise from benevolent affections are all virtuous and benevolent; and those which arise from selfish affections are all selfish and sinful. The benevolent passions are to be freely and perfectly exercised, but the selfish passions are to be entirely mortified, and not merely restrained. Those who have treated of the passions, have generally, if not universally, considered them as neither good nor evil, only as they are directed and employed to a good or evil purpose. Hence they strongly urge the duty of properly regulating and employing the passions. They represent them as wings or sails to the soul, which, by a proper regulation, may greatly assist us in the practice of virtue, and more especially in the duties of devotion. But this is a very erroneous representation of the passions, which are all either benevolent or selfish, and in their lowest, as well as in their highest degree, either virtuous or sinful. The benevolent passions are, in every degree, virtuous, and need no regulation; but the selfish passions are, in every degree, sinful, and ought to be entirely extinguished. Many seem to imagine that they may innocently indulge any of their passions, if they only restrain them from breaking out into any improper words or actions. But the truth is, every selfish passion, whether outwardly expressed, or inwardly smothered in the breast, is altogether criminal, and ought to be not merely restrained, but instantly and utterly destroyed.

5. It appears from the general tenor of this discourse, that men are active, and not passive, when they experience a change of heart. Under the renewing influence of the divine Spirit, they exercise benevolent, instead of selfish affections. Their new heart consists in new affections, desires, and passions, and not in any new faculty, principle, or taste. They put off the old man, and

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put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. They experience no alteration, or obstruction, or enlargement in their natural powers, by the transforming influences of the Spirit. Regeneration is altogether a moral, and not a physical change, and wholly consists in new and holy affections, according to the plain declaration of the apostle, who expressly says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love," not the principle of love; "joy," not the principle of joy; "peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness," not the principle of these holy and gracious affections. There is no intimation in scripture, that men are more passive in regeneration than in sanctification; or that they are ever passive, under the special influence of the Spirit of God.

6. We may justly infer from what has been said, the propriety of God's requiring sinners to change their own hearts. This he certainly does require them to do, either directly or indirectly, in every command he has given them. When he requires them to make them new hearts, to rend their hearts, to purify their hearts, and to give him their hearts, he directly requires them to change their hearts. And he indirectly requires them to do this, when he calls upon them to repent, to believe, to turn from their transgressions, and cease to do evil, and learn to do well. All these commands require them to put forth new affections, desires, and volitions, which is precisely the same thing as changing their hearts. And this appears to be perfectly reasonable. But we could see no propriety in any of these divine precepts, if they required any thing prior to the free and voluntary exercise of holy affections. If a new heart consisted in a new faculty, principle, or taste, there could be no more propriety in God's requiring sinners to change their heart, than in requiring them to add another cubit to their stature. But if a new and holy heart consists in new and holy affections, then there is the same propriety in God's requiring sinners to change their hearts, as in requiring them to do any duty whatever. Indeed, it is only in the view of the heart as consisting in free and voluntary exercises, that we can see the consistency of the divine commands to sinners with the doctrine of regeneration. While they view the new heart as distinct from new affections, and as the principle from which they proceed, they will plead the want of a new heart as an insurmountable obstacle, or natural inability, in the way of their loving God, repenting of sin, or doing any thing in a holy manner. They will plead that they cannot give themselves a new and holy principle, or change their own hearts. But as soon as they are convinced that a new heart consists entirely in new and holy affections, and that they need no new faculty or principle, in order to ex-

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ercise such new and holy affections, they necessarily feel their obligation to make them a new heart and a new spirit, and to obey every divine command. They find they have no excuse for continuing any longer in impenitence or unbelief.

Finally, it appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that it is the immediate duty of both saints and sinners to put away all the evil treasure of their hearts. Saints have no right to live any longer in sin, or to have another evil affection, desire, or passion. They ought to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. There is but one law for the saint and the sinner; and that is the law of love, which requires perfect purity of heart. It is, therefore, the immediate and important duty of sinners, to change their hearts, to change their course, to return to God, and to devote themselves entirely and for ever to his service.

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SERMON LIV.

NOTHING UNREASONABLE OR UNINTELLIGIBLE IN THE NEW BIRTH.

Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? — John, iii. 9.

Since mankind are the creatures of God, they must be subject to a divine influence in all their free and virtuous exercises. This is the plain dictate of reason. Aratus, a heathen poet, says, "We are also his offspring." And other heathen poets and orators ascribe the extraordinary virtues of eminent men to a divine afflatus or influence on their minds. In this, the light of nature entirely harmonizes with the light of divine revelation. All the inspired writers of the Old Testament represent God as exercising a special divine influence over the views, and feelings, and conduct, of all good men. But though the Jews enjoyed not only the light of nature, but the writings of Moses and the prophets, yet most of their rulers and teachers lost the knowledge of this plain and important doctrine. Accordingly our Saviour took peculiar pains to teach them the nature and necessity of regeneration by the special influence of the divine Spirit. He taught this doctrine in his sermon on the Mount. He said to his hearers, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." He urged them to pray for the Holy Spirit, and assured them, for their encouragement, that their heavenly Father was more ready to bestow this upon them than they were to bestow good gifts upon their children. Indeed, his whole sermon was designed to show the absolute necessity of a change of heart in order to salvation, and the absurdity as well as danger of resting on external obedience, without internal holiness. By hear-

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ing this, or some other discourse, in which Christ condemned the self righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, was led to desire a private interview with him, for the sake of gaining more light upon some subject which labored in his mind. This was probably the subject of regeneration, though he did not expressly mention it. But Christ, knowing his desire and design in coming to him, enters into a free and familiar conversation upon the doctrine of divine influence in the renovation of the heart. Let us hear what passed between them upon this interesting subject. "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered — Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?" It appears from this last expression, that Nicodemus could not understand what Christ said upon the doctrine of regeneration. And many others have found great difficulty in understanding what he said upon this subject, and have been ready to ask, How can these things be? This question naturally leads me to show in the following discourse, that there is nothing unreasonable or unintelligible in Christ's representation of the new birth, or regeneration.

Nicodemus seemed to suppose that there was something absurd in all the particulars which Christ mentioned in respect to a renovation of heart. For he said, "How can these things be?" I shall, therefore, consider each particular distinctly.

1. There was nothing absurd in what Christ said concerning the *necessity* of regeneration. This he grounded on total depravity. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." No man can see this necessity who is ignorant of the total depravity of the human heart by nature. And it was principally if not entirely owing to his ignorance of this truth, that Nicodemus could not understand any thing which Christ said about the new birth. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and all of that sect denied total depravity. This appears from the language of the

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Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, and from what Paul said of himself before his conversion. They both looked upon themselves, as touching the law, blameless. All the Pharisees were spiritually whole, and altogether unconscious of the entire depravity of their hearts. They could not, therefore, see any necessity of a saving change. Regeneration appeared to them a gross absurdity. And it must always appear in the same light to all those who believe that mankind are by nature either perfectly or partially holy. If there be the least spark of true holiness in the natural heart, there can be no necessity, nor even possibility, of its being renewed by a divine operation. But if, on the contrary, it be true that all men are naturally dead in trespasses and sins; if the hearts of sinners be full of evil, and fully set in them to do evil; if they have a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be; if they are, as Christ said, serpents, a generation of vipers, and of their father the devil; if such be the total depravity of sinners by nature, then there is an absolute necessity of their being born again, or experiencing a change of heart by the special influence of the divine Spirit. Whoever is convinced of the truth of total depravity must be equally convinced of the necessity of regeneration. And every man may be convinced of total depravity, who will properly consult the Bible, or the exercises of his own heart. The declarations of all the inspired writers, and the experience of all ages, afford infallible evidence that there is none good by nature, and that all are become guilty and unprofitable. And in the view of this truth there appears no absurdity in Christ's saying to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye *must* be born again."

2. There was nothing absurd in what Christ said concerning the *nature* of regeneration. He represented this change as consisting in true holiness, which is directly opposite to the exercises of the carnal, unrenewed heart. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The Holy Ghost in regeneration produces his own nature, which is true holiness. This is that moral image of God, which man lost by the fall, and which the apostle Paul tells us is restored by the renovation of the heart. He exhorts the Ephesians, "to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And he tells the Colossians that "they had put on the new man, which was renewed *after the image* of him that created him." The apostle John says, "God is love." His whole moral character consists in holy love, or disinterested benevolence. And it is this spirit of pure, holy love, which is produced by the Holy Spirit

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in regeneration. Accordingly we read, "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God." And again christians say, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The Spirit of God in regeneration produces that benevolence which is the source of every holy and virtuous affection. This the apostle Paul tells us in plain terms. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness," &c. These are voluntary, holy affections, which are so many different exercises or modifications of true benevolence. Now surely there is nothing absurd in a change from sin to holiness, from the image of Satan to the image of God, and from total selfishness to pure, disinterested love. There is a great propriety in the Holy Spirit's producing such a change in the depraved, selfish hearts of sinners. And there is no more difficulty in conceiving of their becoming holy, than of their remaining sinners; or of their exercising holy and benevolent affections, than of their exercising unholy and selfish ones. Such a regeneration they need, to purify them from their moral pollution. "The renewing of the Holy Ghost" is called "the washing of regeneration." The apostle tells the Corinthians that they had been purified by the influence of the divine Spirit. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified—by the Spirit of our God." And God tells his sinful people that he would cleanse them from their moral defilement in the same way. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Such is the moral, purifying effect of regeneration, which is suited to the character, and perfectly consistent with the moral agency of totally depraved sinners. Hence there was nothing absurd in Christ's saying to Nicodemus, that a man must be "born of water and of the Spirit." That is, born of the Spirit, which purifieth the heart, as water purifies the body. The nature of regeneration is entirely consistent with the nature of man, as a free, depraved, accountable, moral agent.

3. There was nothing absurd in what Christ said concerning the *efficient cause* of regeneration. He ascribed the renovation of the heart to the efficacious operation of the divine Spirit. He said that man must be born of the Spirit. And if regeneration consists in the production of new, holy affections of the heart, in those who were totally depraved and under the entire dominion of sin, then it is easy to see that no cause less powerful than the

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direct operation of the Spirit of God, can produce this great and radical change. No means, nor motives, are sufficient of themselves to produce true benevolence in the heart of a totally selfish sinner. Though Paul plant and Apollos water, yet God must give the increase. He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine in the heart, to give those who are spiritually blind, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The means of instruction may give sinners speculative knowledge, but nothing more; they cannot change the heart, or slay the enmity of the carnal mind. Accordingly, the sacred writers uniformly ascribe regeneration to the immediate efficiency of a divine influence. The apostle John says, that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And the apostle Paul represents believers as being renewed by the same almighty power which was displayed in raising Christ from the dead. It is evident, therefore, that there was nothing absurd in Christ's ascribing regeneration, or the production of holiness, to the powerful agency of the Holy Ghost, whose peculiar office it is, to reënstamp the moral image of God upon the hearts of sinners.

4. There was nothing absurd in what Christ said, concerning the *mode* of the divine operation in changing the heart of the sinner. He represented it as altogether impereeptible to the subject of the divine influence. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." A divine influence can never be perceived by any created being. The angels saw the world created, and shouted for joy; but they did not perceive the influence of the Deity, by which he made the world. God now upholds the world in existence by a powerful operation, but we cannot discern his almighty influence. He exerts a constant and powerful influence upon us, by which we live, and move, and have our being; but we cannot perceive the divine influence by which we are preserved, and live, and move. Christ gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, health to the sick, and life to the dead; but those subjects of his almighty power could not perceive the secret invisible operation of it. So those who are the subjects of the regenerating influence of the divine Spirit, cannot perceive the power by which they are raised to spiritual life. The Spirit operates agreeably to their moral and intellectual powers, and it is only the voluntary exercise of those powers that they perceive, when they are caused to love God whom they had hated. The sinner, in passing from spiritual death to spiritual life, perceives nothing but those gracious affections, which are

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produced by the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit. All he can know *sensibly* is, that whereas he was blind, he now sees; and whereas he once hated God, he now loves him supremely. Christ, therefore, gave a just and intelligible account of the mode of the divine operation in regeneration. It is altogether imperceptible by the subject of renovating grace, and ought so to be represented.

5. There was nothing absurd in Christ's representing the Holy Spirit as acting as a *sovereign*, in renewing the hearts of men. He did assert the sovereignty of the Spirit in his gracious operations. "The wind bloweth where it listeth,—so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Holy Ghost is an absolute sovereign, and has a right to display his sovereignty in regeneration. For this change does not consist in giving any new natural power or faculty to sinners, by which to enable them to love God, and to believe to the saving of the soul. If this were the nature of regeneration, then it would seem that the Spirit must regenerate all who enjoy the gospel, in order to render any inexcusable for rejecting it. But if all their natural powers are good, and they are capable of loving God and embracing the gospel, without having any new natural power or strength given them by the divine Spirit, then he may give a new heart to whom he pleases, and leave whom he pleases in their native state of voluntary opposition to God. The total depravity of sinners, which consists in their free, voluntary, unholy exercises, is the only thing that renders regeneration necessary, and, therefore, the Holy Ghost is not under the least obligation to them, to bow their wills, and make them willing to return to God and embrace the terms of the gospel. Of course, there was nothing absurd in what Christ said concerning the sovereignty of the Spirit's operation in the renovation of the heart, but it would have been absurd, if he had represented it in any other light.

6. There was nothing absurd in Christ's representing the *effects* of regeneration as discernible. Though he represented the divine operation itself as imperceptible, yet he represented the effects as being known and felt. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou *hearest the sound thereof*,—so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Though the wind cannot be seen, yet it can be heard, and its effects felt. So, notwithstanding the divine influence in regeneration cannot be seen or perceived, yet its effects can be felt and seen. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness," &c. These are gracious affections, and the subjects of them must be sensible that they have such new and holy exercises. And when they are conscious of exercising such affections, they may know that they are the fruits of the Spirit, and con-

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sequently that they have been born again. Though they cannot perceive the Spirit operating, yet they can sensibly perceive the effects of his operation. Were it not for the air, there could be no sound; and therefore when we hear the wind blow, or any other sound, we know that there is air, and that it has actually moved. The apostle John represents the fruits of the Spirit as an infallible evidence of a saving change. "We know," says he, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Love is of God, and he that loveth is born of God." Every cause is known by its effects, and there is good reason to believe that the divine influence in regeneration is to be known by its effects. It produces holy affections, and holy affections produce holy actions, which are an evidence to the regenerated and to others, that they have experienced a saving change. It is not strange then, that Christ should represent the operation of the Spirit as being known by its effects, though it is rather strange that Nicodemus, or any other person who had read the Bible, should ask, How can this be?

7. There was nothing absurd in what Christ said concerning the *importance* of regeneration. He did represent the importance of it in the plainest terms. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Though Nicodemus objected, he added, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And after this he still insisted upon the importance of the new birth. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye *must be born again*." If that which is born of the flesh is flesh, if every man by nature is totally destitute of holiness, and perfectly opposed to all good, then nothing short of regeneration can fit him for the service and enjoyment of God in this life and the life to come. For nothing but a new heart, a new spirit, or holy love, can remove his moral depravity, and restore the moral image of God. The strictest morality or external obedience to the divine commands cannot change the corrupt heart. This appears from the nature of morality, which may flow from selfishness as well as benevolence. The scribes and Pharisees were shining moralists, while their hearts were full of moral corruption, and perfectly opposed to Christ and to his Father. On this ground, Christ inculcated the necessity of a change of heart upon Nicodemus, who was a devout and shining Pharisee. No external actions can change the heart, though the heart, when changed, may naturally and visibly change the outward conduct. Mere morality will qualify no man for heaven, nor will mere awakenings and convictions. Though these may have great influence for a time, on the views, the opinions, the feelings, and external conduct of sin-

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ners, yet they may leave the heart in a state of total opposition to God, and instead of lessening this opposition, may greatly tend to increase and strengthen it, and thereby disqualify them for the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, there is no outward restraint, or reformation, that can be a substitute for regeneration. Without holiness, no man can see the Lord; and without a renovation of heart, no man can be holy. Let no man, therefore, marvel that he must be born again.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If Christ gave a plain and consistent representation of regeneration, then it is strange that so many have misunderstood it. Nothing which Christ ever said has been so much misunderstood and misrepresented, as his discourse with Nicodemus respecting the new birth. In every age of Christianity, ministers as well as others have run into strange, unscriptural, and absurd notions of regeneration. This is strange, if Christ gave a true and clear account of the renovation of the heart, and it can be ascribed to nothing but the aversion of the human heart to real holiness. The total depravity of the heart has a tendency to blind the mind in respect to all doctrines which are according to godliness. And the effect of this blindness appears most strikingly in the false and absurd notions many have entertained of a change of heart from sin to holiness. For some have supposed that it wholly consists in mere baptism. There has been, and still is, a warm controversy among some of the most learned bishops in England upon the nature of regeneration. Some maintain that it consists in water baptism. They profess to build their sentiment upon what Christ said: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." They suppose there is an appointed connection between baptism by water and regeneration by the Spirit. Accordingly, they consider a child, regularly baptized, as regenerated. They build their opinion partly upon the words of Christ, and partly upon the opinion of the primitive fathers in the church. Some of those learned and pious fathers did in their writings use expressions, which seemed to indicate that they supposed there was an intimate, if not an infallible, connection between baptism and regeneration. But others, who are well versed in the writing of those ancient divines, maintain that their expressions do not necessarily nor fairly imply that they believed regeneration was baptism, or necessarily connected with it. We know, however, that Episcopalians have generally viewed baptism in a very important light, and as some way or other having a very favorable influence in respect to salvation. For this reason, they will baptize the

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infants and children of any parents who wish them to be baptized; and after they have been baptized, and received the stated family instruction, they will confirm them, and admit them to communion at the table of Christ, without any farther inquiry whether they have been born of the Spirit. This is all right, if regeneration consists in baptism, or is necessarily connected with it, but not otherwise.

Some have supposed that regeneration implies nothing more than mere morality, or a reformation from any evil courses; but this does not appear to accord with Christ's representation of the new birth.

Some suppose that regeneration implies something more than a regular life, and maintain that it consists in turning the attention and affections from temporal objects, and fixing them upon religious, and invisible, and eternal objects, but without any change of heart. This is no more than what sinners under awakenings and convictions naturally do; but by doing it grow no better, but worse. When they turn their attention and affections from worldly objects, and fix them upon spiritual and divine objects, their carnal minds rise more directly and sensibly in opposition to God and divine truths. This implies no radical change of heart, but only a change from one degree of depravity to another.

Some suppose regeneration consists in a supernatural or miraculous change, by which a new faculty, or a new principle, or a new taste, or a new disposition, is implanted in the mind, which is prior to, and the foundation of, new and holy affections. But if this were true, no sinner could be reasonably required or exhorted to love God, repent of sin, believe the gospel, or do one virtuous action, until God had wrought a miracle, to enable him to do what both the law and gospel require him to do before he is regenerated. Sinners stand in need of no other change than a change of heart, and a change of heart the scripture represents as a change from selfishness to benevolence, or a change from hatred to love to God. Every other representation of regeneration but this of a change of heart, is unscriptural and absurd, and leads to great and dangerous errors in theory and practice. It is of the highest importance that preachers should rightly understand and represent the true doctrine of regeneration, which lies at the foundation of all experimental religion or vital piety. A mistake here is the primary cause of the most fatal errors that abound at this day.

2. If Christ has stated the doctrine of regeneration in a true, a plain, and intelligible manner, then those who disbelieve and reject it as mysterious, unintelligible and absurd, are really guilty and inexcusable in forming their opinion. What has

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been just observed cannot be denied, that regeneration has been greatly misunderstood and misrepresented. And it must be conceded, that men of learning and clear discernment have had reason to reject and deny the doctrine of regeneration when they have seen and heard it represented in a false, mysterious, or unintelligible manner. It is not easy to make men of clear apprehension and discrimination, believe that the Spirit of God in regeneration operates upon the minds of sinners mechanically, and produces a new natural faculty or principle, in which they are entirely passive. Regeneration has often, and I may say generally, been represented in this light, by both writers and preachers on this subject. It has been asserted and strenuously maintained by those who have been esteemed, by themselves and others, as Calvinistically orthodox, that men are entirely passive in regeneration, and that they are naturally unable to exercise any right affections, or to perform any right actions, until they have been made the subjects of this passive change, which is contrary to scripture, reason and experience. It is not easy to make thinking men believe that regeneration consists in external baptism, or in external reformation, or in turning the attention and affections from temporal to spiritual objects, or in any thing in which it does not really consist. Nor is it easy to make those who deny total depravity, believe the doctrine of regeneration in any sense. For they clearly see that there is no necessity, nor even possibility of men's being regenerated, if they are not by nature totally depraved. But if what Christ said be true, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," then all men are by nature totally depraved, and, being totally depraved, must be regenerated or born again, in order to be prepared for the kingdom of God. As Christ founded regeneration on total depravity, and represented it as consisting solely in a change of heart from sin to holiness, so the doctrine as he stated it is perfectly agreeable to scripture, reason and experience. None have a right, therefore, to disbelieve and deny the true doctrine of regeneration. It is founded in a truth which all might and ought to be conscious of, that they have not by nature the love of God in them, but a heart of enmity towards him. And as they have no right to deny the doctrine of total depravity, so they have no right to disbelieve and deny the true doctrine of regeneration, which is founded upon it. The disbelief of the doctrine of regeneration is not a mere speculative error, but an error which subverts the foundation of the gospel, and the hope of salvation. None have reason to hope for salvation, without that change which Christ has declared to be absolutely necessary in order to enter into the kingdom of God.

3. If there be nothing absurd in the doctrine of regeneration as stated by Christ, then there is no inconsistency between the

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true doctrine of regeneration and any other doctrine of the gospel. If regeneration were really absurd, then it would be inconsistent with all rational doctrines; but if it be a plain and reasonable doctrine, then it cannot really clash with any other reasonable doctrine. But it has often been supposed, however, to be inconsistent with several plain and important doctrines of the gospel. Many seriously think and say that they cannot see how God can sincerely invite all unregenerate sinners to accept of salvation upon the terms of the gospel, when he knows that they cannot accept until they have a new faculty, a new principle, a new nature, or a new disposition, given them without any act or agency of their own. It must be allowed that, according to this representation of regeneration, it does appear to be totally inconsistent with the universal offers of the gospel. We can see no consistency in God's inviting sinners to accept of salvation upon impracticable terms. But if what Christ said of the nature and necessity of regeneration be true, it is perfectly consistent with the general invitations of the gospel. For sinners do not need to be regenerated, to *enable* them to embrace the gospel, but only to *dispose*, or make them *willing* to embrace it. Many seriously think and say, that they cannot see how God can justly require all sinners to believe the gospel, when he knows that they *cannot* believe it before a new principle of action is given them, in a change in which they are entirely passive. If sinners were under a natural inability to embrace the gospel before they have a new principle implanted in their minds, we could not see the justice of God in commanding them to do a natural impossibility. Others think and say, it is still more unjust and absurd to threaten sinners with eternal death for not believing the gospel; which they could not believe before they were regenerated, and had not natural power to believe. The true doctrine of regeneration has none of these supposed inconsistences attending it. They have been owing to the misunderstanding and misrepresentations of those who have written and preached upon this doctrine. No discerning, impartial reader of the Bible would find any absurdity or inconsistency in the doctrine of regeneration, as stated by Christ and the inspired writers. They represent it as consistent with all the invitations, commands and threatenings in the gospel. And it must appear so to every one when clearly and justly explained.

4. If regeneration be such as Christ has represented it to be, then we see why the gospel has such different effects at different times, and in different places. Regeneration opens the hearts of sinners to embrace the gospel, as it opened the heart of Lydia. So long as men remain in the state of nature, and

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under the entire dominion of a totally depraved heart, they always despise, or neglect, or oppose the gospel. No external means or motives can remove their enmity to God and the gospel; but regeneration, or a change of heart, slays their enmity and reconciles them to God, to Christ, and to the gospel. As God causes it to rain on one city, and not on another, so he sends a shower of divine grace on one place, and not on another. The wind blows where it listeth. The Holy Spirit acts as a sovereign in operating on the minds of men. He awakens one, and not another. He convinces one, and not another. And he renews one, and not another. If a person or people resist his operations, he often leaves them for a time, and, not unfrequently, for ever. The seven churches of Asia gradually resisted his power and influence; for which he finally forsook them, and left them to pine away in their iniquities. He is still acting in the same sovereign manner, and leaving one person and one people after another, to sink in stupidity, guilt and death. The gospel has once and again produced its saving effects here; but for years its saving influence has been diminishing, and seems to be almost entirely gone. The reason is, the Holy Spirit has withdrawn his awakening, convincing, and converting influence. But why has he withdrawn his special influence? Is it not because he has been long and vigorously resisted? Has not the divine Spirit been resisted by sinners, and grieved by saints? He may soon return, and appear in his glory in building up Zion; but there is great reason to fear that he will not.

5. If regeneration be such a change of heart as Christ has represented, then it affords no excuse to sinners for delaying to embrace the gospel. They take a great deal of pains to find excuses for neglecting the concerns of the soul, and delaying to repent and believe in Christ. They devise a variety of excuses for their negligence and delay, which appear plausible to themselves, and, they are ready to imagine, must appear so to others. But their excuses will not bear a serious examination, and if they are hardly pressed, they will give up one after another, until they come to their dernier resort, which they resolutely maintain. They confidently ask, Must not men be regenerated before they repent and believe the gospel? Is not regeneration the work of God? Can we regenerate ourselves? I ask you, Why not? — if regeneration be the same as loving God, instead of hating him, or if it be the same as actually and voluntarily turning from sin to holiness. You are as able to love God, as to hate him. You are as able to turn from sin, as to continue sinning. You are as able to love God before you do love him, as afterwards. You are under moral obligation to love God, before you love him. You are required to

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love God before you love him. There is nothing hinders you from loving God, but your present disaffection to him. God cannot turn you from sin to holiness, without your freely and voluntarily turning yourselves. God cannot give you a new heart and a new spirit, without your freely and voluntarily making a new heart and a new spirit. Your need of regeneration is no obstacle in the way of your loving and obeying God, and therefore your not being regenerated is no excuse for your not loving and obeying God. I appeal to your own consciences, whether you feel that you have a right to plead before God your want of regeneration, as an excuse for not loving and obeying him with all your heart. Your consciences forbid you to make such an excuse before God. The reason why conscience forbids you to make such a plea, is because you are able, as has been shown, to accept the offers of the gospel, because you are able to obey the commands of the gospel, and because you deserve to be punished for refusing to obey. Why will you plead that for an excuse for all your neglect of duty, which both God and conscience tell you is of no weight, and can be of no avail? Be entreated not to deceive yourselves with a false notion of regeneration, which has been such a stumbling block to many. If you have formed a false notion of it, renounce your error, and the false inference you may have drawn from it; and immediately obey the express command to make you a new heart and a new spirit. "For why will ye die?"

6. If regeneration consists in a change of heart from sin to holiness, as Christ represented, then we may see why there is a mutual alienation between the unregenerate and the regenerate; or between sinners and saints; or between the sons of God and the children of the world. Their hearts are diametrically opposed to each other. The regenerate love holiness, in themselves, in God, in Christ, and in the friends of Christ; but the unregenerate hate holiness, in God, in Christ, and in the friends of Christ. The regenerate hate sin, in themselves and in the children of the world; but the unregenerate love sin in themselves and in the men of the world. These directly opposite feelings towards sin and holiness, create an alienation between sinners and saints. Saints have always manifested their alienation from sinners, by coming out from among them, and hating and avoiding their evil examples, and condemning and opposing their destructive courses; while on the other hand, the children of the world have hated, opposed, oppressed, and used violent methods to crush the cause and friends of Christ. This controversy and alienation between the regenerate and unregenerate, the apostle tells the christians in Galatia, had been, was then, and would be the source of great unhappiness in the

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world. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now." This controversy will last until regeneration shall destroy the root of it in the hearts of sinners.

7. If the Holy Spirit in regeneration produces the fruits of holiness in the hearts of those whom he regenerates, then they may know that they have been born of the Spirit. If they have the fruits of holiness in their hearts, they will manifest those fruits in their lives. If they love God, they will love the friends of God, which the apostle declares to be an infallible evidence of regeneration. "We know," says he, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." It is on this ground, that christians are required to know that they are the children of God, and joint heirs with Christ to eternal life. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." If there were no such thing as regeneration, there would be no propriety in calling upon men to examine themselves; or if regeneration did not consist in a change of heart and in the fruit of the spirit, there would be no propriety in calling upon any to examine themselves whether they are in a state of grace. It is the true doctrine of regeneration that forms the essential distinction between saints and sinners, and lays a foundation for saints to know that they have been born again. And it is their duty to assure themselves that the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts, and to manifest it to the world, by walking in newness of life, and displaying the fruits of holiness. "They are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Finally, if regeneration be an active change from sin to holiness, then sinners may know their character, their condition, and their duty. They are, by nature, free, voluntary enemies to God, and totally destitute of every holy affection. This is their character. Their condition is a state of condemnation. The wrath of God continually abides upon them. Their immediate and indispensable duty is, to turn from sin to holiness; from hating to loving God; from disobeying to obeying God; and from rejecting to embracing the gospel. These duties are founded in their rational nature and depraved condition, and though the wind bloweth where it listeth, though the Holy Spirit either softens or hardens their hearts, they are immediately binding upon them. There is no room left to ask what you should do.

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SERMON LV.

THE ORDER OF GRACIOUS EXERCISES IN THE RENEWED HEART.

— But faith, which worketh by love. — Galatians, v. 6.

Paul was surprised that the churches of Galatia which he had been instrumental in planting, should so soon be led into great and dangerous errors by false teachers. "I marvel," says he, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The apostle had taught these christians that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, and that his atonement is the only foundation of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. But the false teachers denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and taught the doctrine of justification by the deeds of the law. This he represents as a fatal error. "For," says he, "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." And he goes on to say, "I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." The Judaizing teachers were ignorant of the nature of regeneration, and its necessity in order to those gra-

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cious exercises which are connected with justification and eternal life; and it was owing to their ignorance of this saving change, that they maintained the doctrine of justification by the deeds of the law. The apostle, therefore, strikes at the root of their fatal errors by saying that sinners are justified by that *faith in Christ*, which works by *love*. But it has long been a question, whether the apostle means, by this mode of expression, to assert that faith flows from love, or that love flows from faith. This is a very important question, because a just solution of it will directly tend to distinguish all true religion from that which is false.

All evangelical writers and preachers maintain that none can be real christians without exercising faith, repentance and love; but they differ widely in respect to the proper order of these gracious affections. Some place faith before love and repentance, and some place love before repentance and faith. Though all true christians do actually experience these gracious exercises, yet very few are able to determine from their own experience, the order in which they take place in a sound conversion. This we must learn chiefly from scripture, and from the nature of these holy affections. And that we may discover the truth upon this interesting subject, it is proposed in the present discourse to consider two things. One is, the order in which gracious exercises take place in a renewed sinner; and the other is, the importance of representing such gracious exercises in their proper order.

I. Let us consider the order in which holy exercises take place in a renewed sinner. The Spirit of God in renewing, sanctifying, or converting a sinner, does not give him any new natural power, faculty, or principle of action; but only gives him new affections or exercises of heart. It is true, indeed, the Holy Spirit commonly awakens and convinces a sinner, before he converts him. He makes him see his danger, and feel his desert of eternal destruction, before he reconciles him to God, or turns him from sin to holiness. But as both sin and holiness consist in free, voluntary exercises, so the divine Spirit, in converting a sinner, only turns him from sinful to holy exercises.

Having premised this, I proceed to consider the order in which the Spirit produces the first gracious affections. If love be distinct from repentance, and repentance distinct from faith, which cannot be reasonably denied, then one of these affections must be exercised before another, in a certain order. They cannot all be exercised together. The question now is, which is the first, second, and third, in order. And here it is easy to see that *love* must be before either repentance or faith.

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Pure, holy, disinterested love, which is diametrically opposite to all selfishness, is the essence of all true holiness; and, of consequence, there can be no holy affection prior to the love of God being shed abroad in the heart.

A sinner must exercise love to God, before he can exercise repentance of sin which is a transgression of his law. Though, while he hates God, he may be sorry that he has provoked his displeasure, yet he cannot be sincerely sorry that he has disobeyed and dishonored a Being whom he hates. True repentance consists in that self loathing and self abasement for sin, which arises from a clear view of the glory and excellence of the divine character. Hence says Job to God, "I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." No sinner, while in a state of enmity and opposition to God, can exercise such genuine repentance. This can flow from no other source than supreme love to the supreme excellence of the Deity. Love therefore, in the very nature of things, must be prior to repentance. The renewed sinner always loves God, before he repents of sinning against him. The holy Spirit, in the first instance, turns the heart of the sinner from hatred to love. Love is always the very first exercise of a renewed sinner. We cannot conceive it to be possible, that he should exercise either repentance, or faith, before he loves God whom he had hated. The *fruit* of the Spirit, yea, the *first* fruit of the Spirit, is that pure, holy, disinterested love, which is the fulfilling of the law.

The next fruit of the Spirit is repentance. As soon as the renewed sinner loves God supremely, he must loathe and abhor himself for hating, opposing and dishonoring such a holy and amiable Being. True repentance naturally and almost instantaneously follows true love to God. The renewed heart is tender and teachable, and leads the subject of it to exercise godly sorrow and genuine repentance for all his past ingratitude, impenitence and obstinacy. So God represents the true convert. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I *repented;* and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." The sinner no sooner loves God than he justifies him, and condemns himself. Like the penitent publican, he freely acknowledges himself to be a sinner, and accepts the punishment of his sins. The malefactor on the cross no sooner loved the suffering Saviour, than he

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repented of his sins, and accepted the punishment of them. Paul no sooner exercised true love to God, than he repented of his sins, and sincerely acknowledged the justice of the law which condemned him to die. "For," says he, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." As soon as the holy Spirit reconciles the sinner to God, he naturally loathes and condemns himself, as God loathes and condemns him, for his sins. He does not stand to inquire, before he repents, whether God loves him and intends to save him; for he feels both bound and disposed to repent, though God should cast him off for ever. As it is morally impossible for the sinner to repent before he loves God, so it is morally impossible for him to refrain from repenting after he loves him. True repentance always flows from love to God, and not merely from a hope of salvation.

As repentance follows love, so faith follows both love and repentance. When the sinner loves, he will repent; and when he repents, he will exercise not merely a speculative, but a saving faith. It is morally impossible for a sinner to love Christ for condemning sin in the flesh, until he hates sin and sincerely repents of it. It is morally impossible that he should love the grace of the gospel, until he loves the justice of the law. It is morally impossible that he should feel his need of a Saviour, until he sees and feels that God would be righteous and amiable in sending him to destruction. But as soon as he loves the divine character, and the divine law, and condemns himself as the law condemns him, he is prepared to love Christ, and to depend upon him alone for pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. He chooses to be saved through the atonement of Christ, because he sees no other way in which God can be just, and yet justify and save him from deserved punishment. Having exercised love and repentance towards God, he is prepared to exercise faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Agreeably to this order of gracious exercises, John preached, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And after John, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel." Thus it appears that *love* is the first exercise of the renewed sinner, *repentance* the second, and *faith* the third. This is the order in which these gracious exercises always take place, and it is morally impossible that they should take place in any other order. There may be a false faith, and a false repentance,

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before a false love; but there cannot be a true repentance before a true love, nor a true faith before a true repentance. True, disinterested love, which is the fruit of a divine influence, is always the first exercise of the renewed sinner, and both his repentance and faith flow from such pure love. So that faith's working by love does not mean that love flows from faith, but that faith flows from love. I shall now endeavor to show,

II. The importance of representing these first exercises of the renewed heart in the order I have mentioned. Upon this point there is a diversity of opinions, among those who believe the absolute necessity of a spiritual and saving change in order to salvation. Some say that faith, repentance and love are all produced at once, in regeneration; and that they cannot be considered as properly distinct, because they involve each other. They suppose that faith implies love, and love implies faith; that faith implies repentance, and repentance implies faith; or rather that faith implies all the christian graces. But this seems to be an absurd supposition. For all holy exercises are really distinct, and though in a certain sense connected, cannot be exercised at one and the same moment. Some who allow that faith, repentance and love are really distinct exercises, and take place in succession, yet say it is of no importance to determine in what order they follow one another, because they have no fixed order of succession, but take place sometimes in one order and sometimes in another. Sometimes the renewed person may exercise love in the first instance, sometimes faith in the first instance, and sometimes repentance in the first instance. The Spirit, they suppose, operates differently upon different persons. In one person he may first produce faith; in another person he may first produce repentance; and in another person he may first produce love. He observes, they imagine, no certain order in his special operations, and consequently those who are the subjects of his special grace are not conscious of the same order in their first gracious affections. One person may say that he was first conscious of love; another that he was first conscious of faith; another that he was first conscious of repentance; and another that he was conscious of no distinct order in his new affections, but only that they were new, and different from any that he ever was conscious of before. It is readily granted that all these subjects of special grace may speak the truth according to the best knowledge they have of their first gracious exercises; and yet it may be equally true that the first gracious exercises in each of them took place in a certain order, and in the same order that I have mentioned. For no person, perhaps, at the very time of his spiritual change, ever attended to the particular order of his holy

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affections, because his mind was first fixed upon the great objects of his love, his repentance and his faith. Besides, though all true believers know that they have had different affections since they became believers, from what they had before, yet very few know how to distinguish and describe their holy exercises according to their specific difference, and proper names. Notwithstanding, therefore, this variety of opinions among real christians, respecting their first christian exercises, it must be certain that the Spirit of God never acts inconsistently in converting sinners; or in other words, that he never produces repentance towards God, before he produces love to God; nor faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, before love to Christ. There is no room to doubt but that he always produces love before repentance, and repentance before faith. This is the only order in which we can conceive it to be possible for the Holy Spirit to produce the first holy affections in the human heart, whether believers are, at the time of their conversion or afterwards, conscious of this order or not. Hence it is of great importance in describing a saving change, that the first exercises of grace should be represented in that very order in which they always take place. For,

1. Unless we place love before faith and repentance, we cannot reconcile regeneration with the divine law, which requires all men to love God immediately and supremely. If we say that faith is the first gracious exercise, then we virtually say that men ought to believe the gospel before they love God; which is the same as to say that it is not the duty of sinners to obey the first and great command, until they become true believers in Christ. And this consequence is allowed by those who place faith before love. They maintain that no man can or ought to love God until he believes that he is freed from the condemning power of the law, and shall escape the everlasting displeasure of a *damning* God. They suppose, therefore, that faith produces both love and repentance. But this is totally inconsistent with the first precept of the divine law, and virtually dissolves the obligations of sinners to love God, until he gives them faith in Christ. But, on the other hand, if we represent love as the first fruit of the Spirit, then the doctrine of regeneration will appear entirely consistent with the divine law. For the law requires love as the first exercise of holy affection; and this is the first affection which every renewed person exercises. Such is the consistency between the law of God, and the special influences of his Holy Spirit in regeneration. And in order to make this consistency appear, it is very important to represent love as before repentance and faith, and not faith as before love and repentance in the renewed heart. The expe-

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rience of christians must be represented according to the doctrines of the gospel, and not the doctrines of the gospel interpreted and represented according to the various and inconsistent experiences of supposed christians.

2. It is of importance to represent love as before repentance and faith, in order to make it appear that sanctification is before justification and the only proper evidence of it. Those who place faith before love and repentance, suppose that men are justified before they are renewed or sanctified. They suppose that saving faith consists in a man's believing that he is justified and entitled to eternal life without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason. It is easy to see that, if faith could be before love and repentance, justification might be before sanctification, and consequently sanctification could be no evidence of justification. But this doctrine, though taught by many noted divines, is contrary to the whole current of scripture, which represents love as before faith and repentance, and as the best evidence of pardon and justification in the sight of God. Paul says, "If children, then heirs;" and not, "If heirs, then children." John says, "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is *born* of God, and *knoweth* God." The only proper evidence of justification is sanctification. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If we place love before faith and repentance, we make repentance and faith holy exercises, and holy exercises the evidence of justification and a title to eternal life. The placing of the first exercises of the renewed heart in this order, is of the highest practical importance. It lays the only solid foundation for all real christians to know that they are born again, and are heirs of everlasting life. I must add,

3. It is absolutely necessary to place love before repentance and faith, in order to distinguish true religion from false. All true religion essentially consists in pure, holy, disinterested love; and all false religion essentially consists in interested, mercenary, selfish love. Now those who place faith before love and repentance, make all religion selfish; because, upon their supposition, all religious affections flow from a belief of their being elected and entitled to eternal life. They maintain that men must first believe that God through Christ is reconciled to them, and intends to save them from the wrath to come. And who that believes this, in respect to himself, will not love God, and be very sorry that he has ever offended a being who has always been so partial in his favor. The worst man in the world would be glad to escape endless misery; and if he can make himself believe that God intends to save him in his sins, he will love and admire him for it. So that this faith, which is before love, and altogether selfish, will produce a false love, a false joy, a false re-

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pentance, a false hope, a false submission, a false obedience, and a whole life of false religion. But if we place supreme love to God, for what he is in himself, before faith, then all the gracious exercises which flow from it will be holy and disinterested affections. The repentance, the faith, the joy, the hope, the submission, the obedience, and the whole religious life, which flow from such love, will be all holy and acceptable in the sight of God. And such persons as thus love God before they know that he loves them, who repent before they know that they shall be forgiven, and who love and believe in Christ before they know that he died for them in particular, may have clear and satisfactory evidence that they have experienced a saving change; that they are meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; and that they shall for ever love and enjoy God, and be perfectly happy in his favor and service.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the first exercises of renewed sinners always take place in the same order, then all real saints have always had precisely the same kind of religious experience. They have always been the subjects of the special, renewing, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. He has converted all sinners who have ever been converted, in all ages. And though he has not always made use of the same external means in converting them, yet he has always produced in their hearts the same kind of effects, and in the same order. He has caused them first to exercise supreme love to God, then true repentance of sin, and then a saving faith in the divine Redeemer. He converted Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the Old Testament saints, in the same manner in which he converted Jews and Gentiles in the apostle's day. And we are told that "they were all made to drink into one spirit;" that is, to exercise the same kind of holy affections. The psalms of David contain not only his own religious experience, but the religious experience of the church of God in general; and it appears that the love, the repentance, the faith, the hopes, the fears, the joys, and the sorrows of all true believers have always been of the same nature. And it is upon this ground, that the apostle with great propriety exhorts christians in all future ages, "to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Though real christians may have different opinions in speculation, concerning some of the doctrines of grace, and concerning the mode and order of the Spirit's operations in renewing or converting sinners, yet their own spiritual experiences are all essentially alike. And could they agree to call the same things by the same proper

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names, they would no longer contend, whether love be before repentance, and repentance before faith; but would all allow that their repentance and faith flowed from supreme love to God. This is the truth in respect to all who have experienced a saving change, and this truth they will all sooner or later believe. Those christians who have been properly taught, do now speak, as well as experience, the same things.

2. If the Holy Spirit, in converting sinners, always produces love to God before faith in Christ, then it is extremely erroneous to represent faith as previous to love in the renewed heart. This is the greatest and most prevailing error among those who believe in experimental religion. For all who place faith before love, suppose that men cannot love God before they believe that God loves them and intends to save them. But the love, the repentance, and all the religious affections which flow from such a faith, are totally selfish, and diametrically repugnant to all the precepts of the divine law. And for this reason, the religion originating from such a source, is properly called Antinomianism, or a religion against the law of God. All Antinomians suppose that unregenerate men are not bound to love God as the law requires, until they believe the gospel; and that believing the gospel is the same as believing that Christ died for them in particular, and that they are actually interested in the benefits of his atonement. It is easy to see at once, that such a faith will naturally produce love to God, love to Christ, love to the Holy Spirit, love to the visible friends of Christ, love to prayer, praise, and the external performance of all religious duties. Such a faith may make the most devout, affectionate and lively christians, in appearance, while their hearts are full of nothing but spiritual pride, hypocrisy and selfishnesss. What made the Scribes and Pharises so devout, so prayerful, and so strict in their external conformity to all the rights and ceremonies of their religion? Was it not because they thought they stood high in the favor of God? What made the multitudes at first follow Christ with their hosannas? Was it not a belief that he loved them, and came to save them in particular from temporal and eternal ruin? The doctrine that faith is before love in conversion, is calculated to lead men into the most fatal delusion. It teaches them to believe that Christ died for them in particular, and intends to save them; and also to love Christ, to love God, to repent, and to obey, from mere mercenary, selfish motives; which is a fatal error, and if cordially embraced and acted upon, will destroy them for ever. Christ always did and always will reject those who love him merely for his favors.

3. If there can be no true experimental religion but what

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originates from that supreme love to God which is before faith in Christ, then there is ground to fear that there is a great deal of false religion among all denominations of christians. For many of their most devout teachers inculcate the doctrine that faith in Christ is always before love to God. And it is to be presumed that a doctrine so agreeable to every natural man has been cordially embraced by multitudes, who have been made acquainted with it by books and by preaching. If we look into many grave treatises published upon vital or experimental religion, we find faith placed before love and repentance. If we read Hervey's Dialogues, Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, The Marrow of Modern Divinity, or many of the writings of the Presbyterian divines in Europe and America, we find that these authors inculcate the doctrine that faith always precedes love, and lays the foundation for love, in the sinner's conversion. If we hear many of the most admired preachers of the present day, we find them most frequently and most pathetically dwelling upon the love of Christ to sinners, and endeavoring to persuade them to believe that Christ is willing to receive them into his favor just as they are, before they exercise either love or repentance. They preach this false and dangerous doctrine, in direct opposition to the well-known sentiments of those divines, who by their writings and preaching, teach the true order of gracious affections in the renewed heart. People generally are much more fond of hearing this error, than the opposite truth; and consequently their preaching is calculated to make many converts, and to make them rapidly. They first endeavor to alarm sinners with a deep sense of their perishing condition by nature, and then most affectionately urge them to believe that Christ loves them, and is willing to save them just as they are, unholy and impenitent. And as soon as awakened, impenitent, selfish sinners come to believe this, their faith fills their hearts with love, and gratitude, and the most ravishing joys. There are many ministers, and some who affect to be the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most sincere friends of vital piety, who are using every method in their power to propagate through the country, sentiments which are directly suited to promote such unholy, unsound and dangerous conversions.

Finally, this subject teaches all who have entertained a hope of having experienced a saving change, the great importance of examining themselves, whether they have ever exercised that precious faith which flows from supreme love to God. There has been a great deal of false religion in the world, and many have been fatally deceived in respect to the nature of their religious experience. The multitudes who entered into covenant with God at Mount Sinai, were deeply impressed with

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what they had heard and seen, and probably thought they were sincere friends to Jehovah; but they deceived and destroyed themselves, and are set up as awful monuments to deter others from the same self deception. Many who followed John and Christ, and heard them gladly, and thought themselves true converts, soon lost all their religious affections, and turned bitter enemies to the gospel of Christ. This gave Christ occasion to warn his hearers against the danger of entertaining false hopes, which would not stand the test of the last day. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name have cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Men are in as much danger of forming and living upon false hopes now, as ever they were. They are in danger of being deceived by the great enemy of souls, who often appears in the form of an angel of light, to deceive and destroy. They are in danger of being deceived by false teachers, who come to them under the garb of the ministers of Christ, and of the friends of truth. And they are in still greater danger of being deceived by the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Surrounded by so many dangers of deceiving themselves in respect to their religious hopes, they need to be very strict and impartial in examining the nature of their religious affections. Hence says the apostle, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" And again he says to the same professors of religion, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy." "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." This he said in direct reference to false teachers. It is commonly through the means of some false doctrine, that men deceive themselves with false hopes of being the subjects of grace. They have no right to hope that they have experienced a saving change, merely because they have been in great anxiety and distress, and afterwards felt peculiar love and joy and peace. For this love and joy and peace may flow from an appropriating faith, or a belief which has no evidence from scripture, sense, or reason, that Christ died for them in particular, and intends to save them. Such religious affections, which flow from such a false faith, afford no evidence of the renovation of the heart. But on the other hand, those have a right to hope that they have passed from death to life, who are conscious of having loved God for what he is in himself, of having hated sin because of its odious nature, and of having

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loved Christ for honoring God and opening the door of mercy to perishing sinners. Such repentance and faith, flowing from such supreme love to the divine character, afford good evidence of a sound conversion. For this is the love, the repentance, and the faith, which the Holy Spirit always produces in those whom he renews and sanctifies. And such sanctification of heart is the only evidence of justification, and a title to eternal life. The Antinomian faith precludes all self examination. Those who place faith before love, hold that it is a sin for those who have once believed that Christ died for them in particular, to doubt of their gracious state. The reason is obvious. If a faith before love, and without love, be a justifying faith, then assurance belongs to the essence of faith; and consequently sanctification is not necessary to prove a believer's justification. But let no man be deceived; for if he have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

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SERMON LVI.

GIVING THE HEART TO GOD A REASONABLE DUTY.

My son, give me thine heart. — Proverbs, xxiii. 26

Mankind are reasonable creatures, and the religion which God enjoins upon them, is a reasonable service. But yet it has always been found extremely difficult to reason with men upon religious subjects. Solomon was the wisest of men, and understood religion, as well any other art or science. And in the latter part of his life, after he had thoroughly investigated the laws of nature, and examined the principles and practices of mankind, he turned preacher; and no mere man ever preached better upon the subjects which he handled. But though his observations were very weighty, though his illustrations were very striking, and though his words were wisely chosen, and, like goads, extremely pointed, yet it does not appear that they very often produced any genuine convictions, or saving effects. There was the same difficulty then that there is now, in reasoning upon that religion which God requires, and which is altogether disagreeable to every natural heart. Were it not for the moral depravity of human nature, it would be as easy to convince men that they ought to love God, as it is to convince them that a child ought to love his parent, or that a servant ought to love his master. But so long as the carnal mind remains, which is enmity against God, it is extremely difficult to convey light and conviction to the understandings and consciences of sinners, upon the disagreeable subject of religion. This is the principal difficulty in the way of making every one feel his obligation to obey the precept in the text, "My son, give me thine heart." God here speaks, with paternal affection

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and authority, to every one of his undutiful and disobedient children; and they are all under indispensable obligations to hear and obey his voice. It is, therefore, proposed,

I. To explain the precept in the text; and,

II. To show the reasonableness of complying with it.

I. The first thing to be considered is the import, or proper meaning of giving the heart to God.

1. This implies the exercising of love to God. To love, and to give the heart, signify the same thing. No man is ever said to give his heart to any object, without loving that object. Men may attend to a thousand things, converse about them, and reason upon them, without loving them, or giving their heart to them. But when they love any object, they may then be said to give their heart to it. Men may believe the being of God, and see the displays of his perfections in his word and providence, while they exercise no love to him, but withhold their hearts from him. So our Lord teaches: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." As not giving the heart to God is not loving him, so giving the heart to God must mean actually loving him.

2. Giving the heart to God implies not only loving him, but loving him for what he is in himself. Men may love God for his favors, without loving his true character. The Israelites loved God for opening a passage through the Red Sea and delivering them from the enemies that pursued them; while they were real enemies to his amiable character and glorious designs. Satan supposed that Job might have loved God for the smiles of his providence, while he had a heart to curse him for his frowns. Our Lord reproved those who loved him for the loaves and fishes, but hated his character and doctrines. It is as common now, as ever it was, to love God and Christ from mercenary motives; but this is not truly giving the heart to our Creator and Redeemer. For mercenary love always terminates upon the good bestowed, or expected; and not upon the bestower. God is never truly loved, but only when he is loved for what he is in himself. True love to God terminates upon his truly amiable and excellent character. It is natural for sinners to love those who love them. And whenever they imagine that God loves them and intends to save them, it is as natural for them to love him, as to love any other supposed benefactor. But this is really loving themselves, and not God; and is actually keeping their hearts to themselves, instead of giving them to him. Therefore it is necessary to observe,

3. That giving the heart to God implies loving him supremely. The expression, "to give God the heart," naturally

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denotes supreme affection. It has this meaning when applied to inferior objects. When Judah pleaded for the return of Benjamin, he told Joseph that his father loved Benjamin; and to express the strength of his affection for him, he subjoined that his "father's life was bound up in the life of the lad." To express strong and supreme affection in a parent towards a child, it is common to say that his heart is bound up in that child. Though mankind may sincerely and properly love one another without loving one another supremely, yet they cannot love God properly and sincerely without loving him supremely. To love God for what he is in himself, necessarily implies loving him above all other objects. He is the Supreme Being; he possesses supreme natural and moral excellences; and to love him for these, is to love him supremely. A man may love God for his favors, while he loves himself and other objects more than God; but he cannot love God for his superlative moral excellence, while he loves himself, or any other object, more than his Creator. The scripture always represents true love to God as supreme. God says to every man, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me;" which is virtually saying, Thou shalt suffer no object, but myself, to take the supreme place in thy heart. The first and great command to every man is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" which is tantamount to saying, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God supremely. The divine Saviour requires supreme love to himself. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." And the apostle John represents true love to God as supreme. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." His obvious meaning is, that there can be no true love to God, but what is supreme. If we admit scripture to explain scripture, we must conclude that the command in the text requires supreme love to God. To give God the heart cannot signify any thing less than loving him, and loving him supremely for what he is in himself. The paternal precept in the text, "My son, give me thine heart," requires all the children of men to love God with a sincere, constant and supreme affection. I now proceed to show,

II. The reasonableness of complying with this divine injunction. Here let us consider,

1. That we are the offspring of God. He hath made us and not we ourselves. He is the Father of our spirits, and the former of our bodies. He hath made us wiser than the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven. His inspiration has given us understanding. We have derived all our rational and

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immortal powers from him; and by his constant visitation we are preserved in existence. There is no other being on whom we are so absolutely dependent; and there is no other being who has such an absolute propriety in us. These are plain and obvious reasons for his requiring, and for our giving him, our hearts. He says, "If I be a Father, where is mine honor? and if I be a Master, where is my fear?" If he be our kind and almighty Father, we ought to feel like children towards him, and give him the supreme affection of our hearts. We esteem our existence as infinitely valuable. We would not exchange our rational and immortal spirits for the whole material creation. But whatever we have, that is rational, that is immortal, that is either naturally or morally excellent, we have received from him. Indeed, we have nothing, but what we have received from him. Our capacity of knowing his existence, of discerning his moral excellence, and of loving his great and amiable character, we have received from him; yea, our capacity of loving and enjoying any thing, we have received from his infinite fulness. Nothing, therefore, can be more reasonable in the nature of things, than to love our Maker in whom we live, and move, and have our being, with supreme affection.

2. God is in himself infinitely worthy of the supreme love of all mankind. He is possessed of every great and amiable attribute. He is self existent and independent. He has always existed, and will always exist. His power is unlimited, and he can do every thing that can be done. He has made, and constantly upholds all things, by the word of his power. The heavens, and the earth, and the whole creation, are lighter in his hands than a feather in ours. His understanding is infinite, and surveys all things in all their relations and connections, constantly and perfectly. His presence surrounds all creatures, and fills all places. He is an absolute Sovereign, whose hand none can stay, and whose will none can control. He is infinitely greater than any and all created intelligences. All his creatures are as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity, in comparison with his unlimited and immense existence. These natural perfections of God are inseparably connected with his pure and universal benevolence. God is love. He regards all his creatures from the highest to the lowest, with a tender and benevolent heart. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. His love is entirely disinterested, and never degenerates into partiality, injustice, malevolence, or any other unholy affection. The most discerning eyes of men and of angels never have discovered, and never will discover the least deformity, or imperfection in his moral character. Our

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Father who is in heaven, is supremely excellent in all his natural and moral attributes. It is therefore in the highest degree reasonable, that we should give him the supreme place in our hearts. The intrinsic and supreme excellence of the moral character of God, is the highest possible reason why we should love him supremely.

3. The conduct, as well as the character of God, renders it altogether reasonable that we should give him our hearts. He has done more for us than for any other of his rational creatures. He has exercised his absolute sovereignty in mercy to his sinful and ill deserving creatures on earth. Here he has done his most marvellous works and bestowed his most rich and distinguishing favors. For he has given his Son to die, to redeem us from the wrath to come. To the meanest and vilest of mankind, he has made the gracious offer of eternal life. Some of his most inveterate enemies he has turned into friends, and made them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. And he is still carrying on his great and merciful design of redeeming love, from day to day, as well as from age to age, and bringing home many sons to glory. The operations of his grace towards the sinful children of men, excite the admiration and joy of all the heavenly hosts. How reasonable it is, then, that we should give our hearts to God, who has set his heart upon us, and done as much as it is morally possible for him to do for our everlasting good. God loves our world, and is constantly displaying the wonders of his grace before our eyes. We have, therefore, not only the strongest, but the most distinguishing and endearing reasons for loving him supremely and ardently.

4. It is reasonable that men should give God the supreme affection of their hearts, because this will afford them the highest happiness that they are capable of enjoying. All permanent happiness flows from love. None can enjoy true happiness without placing their supreme affections upon some agreeable object; and that object which stands highest in their affections must afford them their highest felicity. Those who love the world supremely, derive their highest happiness from the world. This is evident from universal observation. How often do we see worldly minded men become immediately wretched, by losing the things of the world which they once loved and possessed. Rational creatures always find their highest happiness in the object in which their hearts are bound up. The natural and irresistible conclusion is, that men must give their hearts to God, the greatest and best of beings, in order to enjoy the highest happiness. So long as their affections are alienated from him, a realizing sense of his character

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and perfections, must fill their minds with the most fearful apprehensions. But as soon as they love him supremely, they will find that peace which passeth all understanding. David acknowledges before God that he found complete satisfaction in the love and enjoyment of him. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Whoever loves God supremely enjoys a blessed union and communion with him, which is a source of the purest and highest enjoyment. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." The only possible way to enjoy such a blessed union and communion with God, is to love him supremely; and this is a just and powerful reason why we should give our whole hearts to him. I must add,

5. It is in the highest degree reasonable that men should give their hearts to God, because there is nothing to hinder them from doing it, but what is entirely criminal and inexcusable. They must love some object supremely; and of course they must love God supremely, or some idol in his place. But there is no being or object in the universe, that deserves their supreme affection besides God; and therefore they must be wholly criminal and inexcusable, if they place their supreme affection upon any other being or object. In the first place, there is no object in the world to prevent their seeing God. The heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy work. All the objects that present themselves to the eyes, and the ears, and the understanding of mankind, instead of excluding God from sight, bring him into view. God is to be seen in the flowers of the field and the fruits of the earth, in the earth itself and in all that lives and moves upon the earth. Whatever is beautiful and amiable in nature, displays the moral excellence and glory of the God of nature, and calls upon mankind to give him the supreme affection of their hearts. In the next place, when God is brought into view, he is the only object to be found, that is worthy of supreme affection. What is the power, the wisdom and benevolence of man, in comparison with the power, the wisdom and benevolence of God, who is over all and above all, blessed for ever more? Why should any man love the world and the things of the world, more than the Creator of the world? Why should any man place supreme trust in any prince or potentate on earth, instead of placing his supreme trust and confidence in the Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength, and perfect benevolence? When God challenges men to bring their strong reasons, why they forsake him and place their supreme affections upon inferior objects, their mouths are stopped, and their consciences plead guilty. No good reason can be given, why those who know God,

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should not love and glorify him as God. Nor will it avail any to plead, in the last place, that their hearts are so selfish, and corrupt, and attached to the world, that they cannot love God supremely. For this is implicitly acknowledging that there is nothing to hinder them from loving God supremely, but what is wholly criminal and inexcusable. If they are capable of loving themselves and the world supremely, they are certainly capable of loving God supremely. They are just as capable of placing their supreme affection upon God, as upon any inferior object. And if they place their supreme affection upon any inferior object, they are guilty of idolatry. The apostle says that covetousness, or supreme love to the world, is idolatry. It is setting up idols in the heart. This God forbids and condemns. As there is nothing that can prevent men from loving God supremely, but their criminal love to themselves and the world, so it is infinitely reasonable that they should renounce all their selfish, sinful and idolatrous affections, and give their hearts to God, who is supremely worthy of their supreme affection and regard.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be reasonable that men should give their hearts to God, then it is reasonable that all men should be really religious. All true religion consists in supreme love to God. This love is the fulfilling of the law. God requires nothing more nor less of any of mankind, than to give him the supreme place in their hearts. And if this be reasonable for one person to do, then it is equally reasonable that every person, without a single exception, should do it. The precept in the text applies to every individual person, who is capable of understanding it. The Father of spirits says to every one of his children, who is capable of understanding his language, "My son, give me thine heart." And this paternal command alone renders it reasonable for every one to obey it. It is not only clothed with infinite authority, but founded in the superlative excellence of the divine character. God is the proper, and the only proper object of that supreme homage of the heart, in which all true religion consists. All the reasons which have been mentioned for men's loving God supremely, are so many reasons for their being truly religious. Who will presume to say that the reasons which have been mentioned for men's loving God supremely, are not just and conclusive? And if they are just and conclusive, then it is reasonable for all men to love God supremely; and consequently it is no less reasonable for all men to be religious, and give their hearts to God. But if it be rea-

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sonable for all men to be religious, how can it be reasonable for any to be irreligious? How can it be reasonable for the young to walk in the ways of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes, and be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God? How can it be reasonable for rich men to trust in their riches and say to themselves, We have goods laid up for many years; let us eat and drink and fare sumptuously every day? How can it be reasonable for great men to refuse to bow down and kneel, and pay religious and supreme homage to the Lord their Maker? How can it be reasonable for careless and stupid sinners, to say in their hearts, there is no God, or to say that the Lord hath forsaken the earth and will not do good, neither will he do evil? How can it be reasonable for awakened sinners, who see themselves in the hands of an angry God who can save or destroy, and whose mercy they ardently implore, to refuse to give him their hearts? This they always do, while they stand and contend with their Maker and call him a hard master. These and every other description of sinners withhold their hearts from God. And though some of them will allow that it is reasonable that they should read, and pray, and perform every external act of religion, yet they all insist that God is unreasonable and requires too much, when he requires them to give him their hearts and love him supremely. So true is it, that "the understanding" of every sinner is "darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the *blindness of his heart*."

2. If it be reasonable that all men should give their hearts to God, then they have no reason to think hard of him for condemning and rejecting all their religious services, so long as they withhold their hearts from him. God does expressly condemn the religious services of all who refuse to give him the supreme affection of their hearts. He declares that the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to him; and that when they spread forth their hands, he will hide his eyes from them; yea, when they make many prayers, he will not hear. And our Saviour addressing himself to the Pharisees, says, "Wo unto you; for ye tithe mint, and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." All sinners pass over the love of God, and neglect to give him the supreme affection of their hearts in their best services. These are not, as they imagine, negatively good, but positively evil. They flow from their hearts, which are enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. The hearts of sinners are as much in their prayers, as the hearts of saints are in their prayers. And as the hearts of saints render their prayers

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positively good, so the hearts of sinners render their prayers positively bad. When they pray, instead of expressing supreme love to God, they express supreme love to themselves; and instead of seeking his glory and the interests of his kingdom, they seek their own personal, private, selfish interest, in opposition to his glory and the highest good of the universe. This God abhors and condemns; and this they ought to abhor and condemn; and this they must abhor and condemn, before they can reasonably hope to be heard and accepted. When they are under genuine convictions and see the plague of their own hearts, they are sensible that their best services are highly displeasing to God; and that he may justly reject both them and their services for ever. Awakened sinners are extremely apt to think that they have good desires, and that they express good desires in seeking and striving for salvation; but this is only building their hopes upon their own righteousness, and resisting genuine convictions, justifying themselves, and condemning God for not hearing their ardent cries for mercy. But anxious sinners must renounce such self justifying and God condemning desires and prayers, before they can have any just ground to expect that God will save them from the destruction they fear and deserve.

3. If it be reasonable for men to give God the supreme affection of their hearts, then it is reasonable to exhort them to exercise supreme love to God immediately. God is as worthy of supreme love now, as he ever will be. Sinners are as capable of loving him supremely now, as they ever will be. There is no station they fill, there is no business they are pursuing, there is no situation they are in, and there is nothing within or without them, which is any obstacle in the way of loving God supremely, at the present time, as well as at any future period. There is as much reason that they should give their hearts to God immediately, as that they should give their hearts to him at all. Every command which requires them to turn from sin to holiness, requires them to turn immediately. Every command which requires them to repent, requires them to repent immediately. And every command which requires them to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit, requires them to make themselves a new heart and a new spirit immediately. God says, "Choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve;" and "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." If it be reasonable for sinners to obey these commands, it must be reasonable to exhort them to obey just as God requires them to obey. Those who are to warn them from him, and in his name, ought to warn them in his words, and not in their own. They have no right to give them leave to delay giving their hearts to God, any more than

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to give them leave to delay reading his word, or calling upon his name, or doing any thing which he has required. And to intimate that they are doing their duty, while they are neglecting to give their hearts to God, which is the essence of all duty, is virtually teaching them disobedience and rebellion. But how often is this done! And how pleased are sinners, when their teachers teach them to delay loving God supremely for the present, which is really teaching them to delay for ever. It is taking off the whole force of the command in the text, "My son, give me thine heart;" and of every other command in the Bible.

4. If it be reasonable for men to give their hearts to God, then every scheme of religion which allows them to withhold their hearts from him, is unreasonable, unscriptural, and essentially false. All true religion essentially consists in supreme love to God; and therefore every scheme of religion which allows men to withhold their supreme affection from him, is another gospel, and diametrically contrary to the gospel of Christ. Such false and dangerous schemes of religion were devised and propagated in Christ's and the apostles' days; and they have continued to be devised and propagated from that time to this. The Antinomians teach men to love themselves more than God, or to love him only for his favors, which is not loving him at all. They maintain that no man ought to love God before he knows that God will save him; which is implicitly saying that men ought not to give their hearts to God until he gives his heart to them. Indeed, it is the fundamental principle of Antinomianism, that God is never to be loved supremely for what he is in himself, or for his supreme moral excellence; a principle subversive of all true religion. The Arminians teach men to love themselves more than God, and to keep their hearts to themselves, while they pay him mere external respect and obedience. They teach the same doctrine that the Scribes and Pharisees taught, which was, that all religion consists in mere external services, which may be performed without the least love to God. The Pharisee that went up to the temple to pray, and even Paul himself, thought he was blameless while he loved himself supremely, and externally honored God with a heart which was far from him. The Universalists teach men to love themselves more than God, and to love him only for the sake of salvation. They allow them not only to withhold their hearts from God, but to act them out as much they please in sin, with full confidence that nothing can separate them from the everlasting approbation and enjoyment of God. As all these schemes of religion deny the necessity of a change of heart and the duty of loving God supremely, they are essentially erroneous and fatally dangerous. They are rotten at the root, and directly calculated to deceive

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and destroy those who cordially embrace them. For these and all other false schemes of religion are agreeable to the natural heart, which is enmity against God. All men wish to be happy in a future state, and have no aversion to any scheme of religion which they think will save them, while they withhold their hearts from God and love themselves supremely.

5. If it be reasonable for men to give their hearts to God, then it is extremely unreasonable in those who have once given their hearts to God, to withdraw them from him. Those who have once given their hearts to God, know what it is to love him supremely, and what great and peculiar happiness is to be found in the love and enjoyment of him. And when they first give their hearts to God, they are apt to imagine that they shall always keep themselves in the love of God, and never forget nor forsake him. But many have been sadly disappointed in their early hopes and resolutions. The hearts of christians are like a deceitful bow, bent to backsliding, and are not to be trusted, but are to be kept with all diligence. God represents himself as disappointed, when those who have professed to be his dutiful children, withdraw their filial affection from him and falsify their profession. For he has said, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie." If we examine the feelings and conduct of God towards those who have lost their first love, we shall find that he has manifested his peculiar displeasure towards them, and often corrected them more severely than his real and open enemies. Saints are of all men the most unreasonable and inexcusable for murmuring and complaining, like Job, Jonah and Elijah, and acting like Aaron, Moses and Peter. Nothing but directly opposite affections can interrupt that supreme love to God which is essential to the christian character. When christians do not love, they hate; when they do not believe, they disbelieve; when they do not obey, they disobey; and when they do not act for God, they act against him. And for them to hate him whom they have loved supremely, or to disbelieve him in whom they have perfectly confided, or to disobey him whom they have delightfully obeyed, or to act against him for whom they have cordially and sincerely acted, must be peculiarly inconsistent, unreasonable and criminal. The best of men, therefore, have abundant reason, and sometimes realize that they have abundant reason to feel as Job did, when he said to God, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

6. If it be reasonable for men to give their hearts to God, then they may reasonably expect to meet his approbation and acceptance whenever they love him sincerely and supremely.

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It is not reasonable that he should love them before they love him; but after they love him sincerely and supremely, they are truly amiable and worthy of his complacency and approbation. And they may assure themselves that they are actually interested in his favor, and entitled to share in the blessings of his kingdom. For he has promised to return to them who return to him, and to love them that love him, and cause all things to work together for their good. Many are very anxious to know whether they belong to the household of faith, and are the children of God, and heirs with Christ to an heavenly inheritance; and for this reason, are often inquiring what are evidences of grace; and sometimes they ask, what is the best evidence of grace. To this serious and important question, the whole tenor of this discourse replies: *Supreme love to God.* It is only for men to look into their own hearts, to know whether they are the children of God and heirs of eternal life. If they are conscious of loving God supremely, they need not doubt whether they are the children of God, and subjects of his special grace. But nothing short of this can give them evidence that their hearts are really renewed; for self love can put on every appearance of supreme love to God, though essentially different from it. Here lies the greatest danger of men's deceiving themselves. But still it may be inquired, how shall men know whether they do really give their supreme affections to God? I answer, by this infallible effect. Those who give their hearts to God, or love him supremely, always give themselves to God with all their interests, for time and eternity. And this is what no self love will do. It is only to apply this criterion to the heart, and it will confirm or destroy the hope of any person. Let all then be entreated for their own sake, to apply this criterion to what they are conscious has passed, and habitually passes in their minds; that they may determine whether they are friends or enemies of God, they themselves being judges. And certainly it belongs to all, as reasonable creatures, to act this reasonable part toward themselves.

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PART XVI.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

SERMONS LVII.—LX.

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SERMON LVII.

THE PECULIAR SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANS.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. — 1 Corinthians, ii. 12.

It seems to be generally supposed that experimental religion is something very mysterious and unintelligible. There was a sect of christians in the third century who called themselves Mystics. They maintained that the Bible is a mystical book, and ought to be understood and explained in a *mystical*, and not in a literal sense. This opinion has never since been entirely exploded. The serious and devout William Law, who wrote excellently on christian perfection, and several other subjects, finally died a Mystic. There is something of a mystical nature to be discovered in many of the old divines, who wrote upon experimental religion under the title of the mystery of godliness, and the mystery of sanctification. Even now we often meet with the phrases, *the mysteries of the gospel*, *the mysteries of religion*, and *the mysteries of our holy religion*. The phrases sound so scripturally that they are generally well received, though seldom understood. And it must be allowed that the sacred writers use so many figures, metaphors, similitudes and parables, that it does seem at first view as though the doctrines and spirit of the gospel were in some measure mystical. At least, this idea seems to be suggested by the apostle's mode of speaking in the text: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." The plain import of these words is,

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That God has given christians a peculiar spirit, by which they have a peculiar knowledge of divine things.

I shall endeavor to describe,

I. The peculiar spirit which God has given to christians; and,

II. Show that this peculiar spirit does give them a peculiar knowledge of divine things.

I. I am to describe the peculiar spirit which God has given to christians.

By a spirit peculiar to christians is meant a spirit which no other men possess. This is evidently what the apostle means by saying, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God." God has given christians a spirit which he has not given to the world, and which is directly opposite to the spirit of the world. If, then, we can ascertain what the spirit of the world is, we may ascertain what the spirit of God is, which he has given to christians. The spirit of the world is that spirit which is common to mankind in general, and which governs all their conduct so long as they continue in a state of nature. It is the spirit of the prince of the power of the air. Or to speak in plainer terms, it is a *selfish* spirit, which leads men to seek their own private, separate interest, in opposition to the glory of God and the general good of the universe. Selfishness reigns in the hearts of the men of the world, and is the essence of all the moral evil that overspreads the earth. But the apostle tells us that God has given christians a spirit which is diametrically opposite to the spirit of the world; and this must certainly be the spirit of *benevolence*. There are but two kinds of moral exercises, which are diametrically opposite to each other, in moral beings. These are *benevolent* and *selfish* exercises. They all possess either a spirit of benevolence, or a spirit of selfishness, and are either holy or unholy, accordingly as they possess the one or the other of these essentially different exercises of heart. And if we now search the scriptures, we shall find that the spirit which God gives, when he renews and sanctifies men, is the spirit of benevolence, which is the moral image of the Deity. Our Saviour says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And the reason is, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And that spirit which is the fruit of the Spirit, is *love*. So says the apostle John: "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God." When God regenerates any person, he sheds abroad his love in his heart. He gives him a heart after his own heart, which is a heart of love. When God foretold his purpose of renewing the hearts of his people in Babylon, who were pining away in their iniquities, he promised to give them a new, tender, benev-

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olent heart. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you." When God renews men in the spirit of their minds, he forms their hearts after his own moral image; and his own moral image is *love*, which comprises all his moral perfections. The spirit which is of God, is a Godlike spirit, or a spirit of pure, disinterested love; which is the essence of all virtue or moral excellence, and which is perfectly opposed to the spirit of the world. This spirit of universal benevolence is so peculiar to christians, that the least spark of it is never found in the hearts of sinners, who love themselves solely and supremely. I now proceed to show,

II. That this peculiar spirit which christians receive from God, gives them a peculiar knowledge of spiritual and divine things. This the apostle expressly asserts in the text: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." To illustrate the truth of this divine declaration, it may be observed,

1. That the spirit of peculiar divine love which christians receive from God, removes that ignorance of spiritual and divine things which is peculiar to sinners. The Bible every where represents sinners as deaf, and blind, and ignorant, in regard to every thing of a spiritual and divine nature. Moses says that sinners in his day had not eyes to see, nor ears to hear, nor hearts to perceive, the displays of God's wisdom, power and goodness towards his people. Solomon says, "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble." And Paul represents sinners as "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." It appears from these passages of scripture, that the peculiar ignorance of sinners in respect to spiritual and divine objects, arises altogether from the depravity of their hearts, which darkens and blinds their understandings. But if this be true, then the peculiar spirit of pure benevolence which christians have received from God, must remove from their minds all that ignorance of divine things which is peculiar to sinners. Pure benevolence must necessarily take away from christians their former ignorance, which arose from selfishness. As the removal of scales from a blind man's eyes will remove all the blindness occasioned by those scales, so the giving to christians a spirit of benevolence must certainly remove all that blindness or ignorance which arose from their former selfishness. If selfishness produces a certain kind of ignorance of

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spiritual things, then benevolence must remove that certain kind of ignorance, by producing a certain kind of knowledge of the same divine objects. And thus the apostle sets the peculiar knowledge which christians have of spiritual things, in direct contrast with the peculiar ignorance of sinners. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." As soon as christians receive that spirit of benevolence which cometh from God, they become spiritual, and as soon as they become spiritual, they discern those spiritual things which sinners cannot discern because of the blindness of their selfish hearts. That benevolence in the minds of christians which removes selfishness, removes, at the same time, the spiritual ignorance which flows from selfishness. This the apostle plainly intimates in his second epistle to the Corinthians. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." But he subjoins, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Here the apostle plainly declares, that when God shines in the hearts of christians, he removes that blindness or ignorance which is peculiar to those that are lost; and at the same time gives them a peculiar knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jesus Christ. And he expresses this idea more fully in the third chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians. Speaking of the Israelites in the wilderness, he says, "Their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart; nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The spirit of benevolence never fails to remove that spirit of selfishness, from which all spiritual ignorance arises.

2. The way in which the scripture represents God as enlightening the minds of men in the peculiar knowledge of himself, is by changing their hearts, or giving them a pure, benevolent spirit. God directed Jeremiah to tell sinners in Israel: "I will give them an heart to know me." As their ignorance of God arose from the blindness of their hearts, so in order to

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remove that kind of ignorance, he determined to give them a wise and understanding heart, or a spirit of true benevolence. When Peter professed the true knowledge of Christ, the Saviour said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." God had converted Peter, and given him a holy and benevolent heart, to know him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent, which prepared him for eternal life. Paul says to the christians of Ephesus, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord." God had opened the eyes of their understanding, and turned them from darkness to light, by giving them a heart to perceive the beauty and glory of divine things. The apostle Peter conveys the same sentiment in what he says to christians in general: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." And the apostle John writes to believers in the same strain: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." And again he says, "beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." These, and a great many other passages of scripture of the same import, plainly teach us that the way in which God teaches christians the peculiar knowledge of divine things, is by giving them his own spirit, which is a spirit of love, or pure benevolence. This leads me to observe farther,

3. That there is no other possible way by which God can give christians the peculiar, or experimental knowledge of himself and divine objects, but by giving to them his own Spirit, or shedding abroad his love in their hearts. He cannot convey this peculiar spiritual knowledge of divine things to any of mankind, by mere *inspiration*. He inspired Saul, but this did not remove the blindness of his heart. He inspired Balaam, but this did not remove the blindness of his heart. He inspired Caiaphas, but this did not remove the blindness of his heart. And Paul supposes a man may have the gift of prophecy, may understand all mysteries and all speculative knowledge, and may have a miraculous faith sufficient to remove mountains, and yet be totally destitute of the true love and knowledge of God. The reason of this is plain, because inspiration has no tendency to change the heart, but only to convey mere speculative knowledge to the understanding. For the same reason, God cannot give men the peculiar, spiritual knowledge of himself by *moral suasion*, or the mere exhibition of divine truth. If he should give them a clear, correct and

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comprehensive knowledge of all the truths in the gospel, this alone would have no tendency to soften or subdue their hard hearts, or make them know what it is to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. Nor can he give them a spiritual discerning of spiritual things, by mere convictions of guilt, fears of punishment, or hopes of happiness. For there is no connection between the common effects of the common influence of the divine Spirit, and the peculiar, experimental knowledge of the spiritual beauty of divine objects. But though God cannot give men this peculiar knowledge, either by inspiration, or by moral suasion, or by mere awakenings and convictions, yet there is one way, the only one, in which he can give it, and that is by giving them his spirit; or a benevolent heart. As soon as they partake of the divine nature, they immediately have a peculiar, experimental knowledge of the things of God. For,

In the first place, by exercising benevolence themselves, they know how all benevolent beings feel. They know how God feels, how Christ feels, how the Holy Spirit feels, how angels feel, how the spirits of just men made perfect feel, and how all their fellow christians feel who have drunk into the same spirit, and exercised the same benevolent affections. So the apostle argues in the text and context: "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." As one man knows what his rational faculties are, so he knows what another man's rational faculties are; or as one man knows what his own selfish feelings are, so he knows what another man's selfish feelings are; or as one man knows what his own benevolent feelings are, so he knows what another man's benevolent feelings are. Just so says the apostle, we who are christians, and have received the spirit which is God, know the things of God; that is, what a benevolent spirit he possesses, and what a benevolent spirit he has given unto us. As soon as God gives christians his spirit, he gives them the knowledge of the holy exercises of his own heart; and of the holy exercises of all who possess his spirit. For the spirit of benevolence is the same in God, in Christ, in angels, and in men. Hence christians are said "to be renewed in knowledge after the image of God." And when they are thus renewed, it is said, "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." They have a new experimental knowledge of God, and of all holy beings, in respect to the moral beauty and excellence of their characters.

In the second place, the peculiar spirit which they have

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received from God, gives them a knowledge of the peculiar happiness of those who possess the spirit of benevolence. Nothing produces such pure, refined and exalted felicity, as holy love. The supreme blessedness of heaven flows from the mutual love which reigns in the hearts of all its holy inhabitants. This peculiar happiness christians know by their own experience; for they have actually enjoyed that heavenly happiness which flows from brotherly love. So the apostle says, when speaking expressly upon this subject: "But as it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit." And he adds, "We have received the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God." Though no *natural* man's eye or ear, or heart, can perceive the things which God has prepared for them that love him, yet those who do love him, know what he has prepared for them, because he has given them his own spirit of benevolence, that they might know the spiritual blessedness laid up for them in another world. Every christian knows the nature of the enjoyments of heaven, though he has never been there. He knows that heavenly happiness arises from the holy love that reigns in the hearts of holy beings. The mutual benevolence of the heavenly inhabitants diffuses mutual joy and complacency through all the mansions of the blessed. All real christians, who possess this pure benevolent spirit, must therefore know the *nature* of that happiness, and of those enjoyments which God has prepared for them, and which they shall receive when they shall take possession of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Finally, the benevolent spirit which christians have received from God, necessarily gives them a peculiar knowledge of the distinguishing truths of the gospel. The whole scheme of the gospel was devised and adopted in benevolence, is carried on by benevolence, and will be completed by benevolence. Benevolence, therefore, prepares christians to *understand it*. Hence the apostle exhorts them, "to be rooted and grounded in love, that they may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge"—that is, the knowledge of those who are destitute of true benevolence. As all the doctrines, precepts, promises and threatenings of the gospel, are founded in love, so none but christians who are rooted and grounded in love, can have a peculiar, spiritual knowledge of holy and divine truths, any more than of holy beings and holy enjoyments. Benevolence is the key to unlock the most pro-

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found, and difficult, and important doctrines of the gospel, and prepare the mind to discern the beauty and consistency of them. These are all easy, says Solomon, to them who understand, or who have that spiritual discernment of spiritual things, which flows from a wise, a benevolent and an understanding heart.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the peculiar knowledge which christians have of God and of divine things arises from benevolence, then there is nothing *mysterious* in experimental religion. Many seem to think that there is something mysterious in experimental religion, and that those who have experienced religion understand something mysterious, which those who are in a state of unrenewed nature have not natural faculties to understand. There are but two real mysteries in the gospel, and these are the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, and the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ. These are strict and proper mysteries, which no created being is capable of understanding, and which christians are no more capable of understanding than any other men. But there are no other doctrines of the gospel which are mysterious, and incomprehensible by mankind. Though it is more difficult to gain a speculative knowledge of some doctrines of the gospel than of others, yet sinners are as capable of gaining a speculative knowledge of the difficult doctrines of the gospel, as christians are. The spirit which christians have received from God has given them no new natural powers, and no new speculative knowledge of the gospel. It has only given them an experimental knowledge of God and divine objects, which arises entirely from their benevolent hearts. They know nothing about religion but what any sinners might know, if their hearts were right. It is true, they are regenerated; but regeneration consists in love. They are sanctified, but sanctification consists in love; they have a new heart, but a new heart consists in love; they have new knowledge, but their new knowledge consists in love; they have new joys, new hopes, new peace, but all these arise from love. They have experienced no other change, but a change from sin to holiness, or from selfishness to benevolence. They see no objects but what they have seen before, and understand no truths but what they understood before. There is nothing more mysterious in loving God than in hating him, or in loving divine objects than in hating them, or in being united to God than in being alienated from him, or in being led by the Spirit of God than in being led by the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. The men of the world love to hear experimental religion represented as myste-

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rious, because they are ready to conclude that they are excusable for not understanding what is mysterious and beyond their power to understand, and for not being and doing what they are told is a mystery, and beyond their power to know, to be, and to do until they experience a supernatural and mysterious change. There is no mystery at all in experimental religion. This clearly appears from the single consideration that all that is contained in it may be explained intelligibly to the meanest capacity. All the essential doctrines of the gospel may be explained, and all the duties of the gospel may be explained, and love to these doctrines and these duties may be explained; but if they were mysterious, they could not be explained; for no real mystery can be explained. All that the scripture means by christians' being born again, being called out of darkness into marvellous light, being made new creatures, being led by the Spirit, being spiritually minded, walking in the Spirit, having their conversation in heaven, and enjoying communion with God, may be clearly explained and understood by those who perfectly hate all spiritual and divine objects. A sinner can understand how a christian feels, as well as a holy angel can understand how a sinner feels. Though an angel never experienced selfishness, yet he knows enough about it to hate it; and though a sinner never experienced holiness, yet he knows enough about it to hate it. Though sinners never had that love to God in which experimental religion consists, yet they know enough about it to hate it. They sometimes are ready to think and say that if they only knew what experimental religion was, they would love and practice it. But when it is clearly and intelligibly explained to them, it never fails to excite the enmity of their carnal mind against it. Let the experimental exercise of supreme love to God be intelligibly and correctly explained to them, and they will oppose it with all their hearts. Supreme love to God implies the loving him more than any other and all other objects, and being willing to give up any other and all other objects for the sake of promoting his glory. So our Saviour explained supreme love to God, and taught his disciples to give up father or mother, brother or sister, houses or lands, natural life or eternal life, for the honor of God and the interests of his kingdom. Upon which one exclaimed, "Who then can be saved!" All experimental religion consists in just such disinterested benevolence. And is this a mystery which sinners cannot understand? By no means; they can fully understand and oppose it. All the religion which the gospel requires is a reasonable service, and ought to be represented in a plain and intelligible manner.

2. If the peculiar knowledge and views which christians

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have of divine things arises from benevolence, then there is no *superstition or enthusiasm* in vital piety, or experimental religion. The enemies of the gospel often represent all pious and devout christians, as either superstitious or enthusiastic. If they are very strict in avoiding all appearance of evil, in condemning all sinful practices, and in discharging all the private and public duties of devotion, sinners are apt to call them superstitious. Or if very zealous in maintaining and defending the doctrines of the gospel, in promoting the cause of religion, and in opposing all religous errors and delusions, they are apt to call them zealots and enthusiasts. But though pious and devout christians may sometimes be superstitious, and sometimes enthusiastic, yet their vital piety, or experimental religion, does not consist in either superstition or enthusiasm; but in pure benevolence, which leads those who possess it, to hate and oppose all superstition and enthusiasm. This will appear, if we only consider in what either superstition or enthusiasm consists. Superstition consists in imaginary fears of signs, omens, or the power and influence of some invisible evil spirit. The Athenians were too superstitious; they were afraid of bad signs, ill omens, and the power of inferior false gods; and used a great many unlawful and absurd means to escape imaginary dangers. And all heathen nations are still too superstitious, and are all their life time in bondage, through imaginary fears. And multitudes in christian lands are not free from such superstition. But pure benevolence is the most perfect and infallible antidote against superstition. The supreme love of God, takes away the fear of man, the fear of the great adversary, and the fear of every inferior, malignant spirit. While christians supremely love, and entirely trust in God, they fear nothing but disobedience. They are not anxious to know what future good or evil awaits them; because they believe that God governs all things, and will cause all things to work together for their good. Enthusiasm consists in a zeal not according to knowledge, which disposes men to form a false estimate of things, and to pursue less important, instead of more important objects. Some are enthusiastically engaged in pursuing visionary schemes of wealth, some in pursuing schemes of knowledge, some in pursuing visionary schemes of ambition, some in pursuing visionary schemes of religion, and some in zealously practicing one religious duty, to the neglect of other and more important duties. There are a vast many kinds and shades of enthusiasm. But piety or experimental religion, which flows from that pure spirit of benevolence that christians have received from God, never leads them into false zeal or enthusiasm; but directly tends to

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lead them to a true estimate of duties and objects, and to pursue each according to their relative magnitude and importance. Of all men in the world, true christians are the freest from both superstition and enthusiasm; though, at the same time, they possess the purest, the warmest, and most persevering zeal in doing what is right, in shunning what is wrong, and in opposing what is evil.

3. If the peculiar knowledge which christians have of divine things arises from a spirit of benevolence, then they who are real christians may *know* that they are such. The spirit which they have received from God, bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God. So the apostle reasons in the eighth of Romans. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." The primitive christians knew that they were children of God, because they had received the Spirit of God, which was the spirit of adoption. All christians at this day have the same spirit of adoption, which gives them the same evidence of being the children of God. The spirit of adoption is essentially different from the spirit of the world, and produces essentially different effects, by which it may be distinguished from the spirit of the world. The spirit of the world is a spirit of selfishness, which disposes men to love the world, and the men of the world; but the spirit which is of God is a spirit of benevolence, which leads men to love God, and the children of God. The apostle John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." The love which all true christians have to the friends of God, is an infallible evidence of their having received the grace of God in truth, whether they attend to and distinguish this evidence, or not. They have the witness in themselves, and ought to see it, and praise God for it. And were it not for some remaining selfish affection, every true christian would know that he is so.

4. If the spirit which christians have received from God, gives them a peculiar knowledge of God and of divine truths and objects, then they may always be able to give a reason of the hope that is in them. Though they are not able to exhibit all the external evidences in favor of the divinity of the gospel, yet they are able to tell what internal impressions and effects the great truths of the gospel have produced in their minds. The reason of their hope is not a knowledge of any new truths contained in the gospel; but it is a belief and love of those truths

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which they had known before, and which carry internal evidence of their divinity and importance. They know the gospel is divine, by the divine effects it has produced in their hearts. This was the primary and solid ground upon which the disciples of Christ built their hopes of eternal life. When some of his nominal disciples went back and walked no more with him, he said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Then Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the son of the living God." Unlearned christians may exercise as strong a faith in the gospel, and build as firm a hope of salvation upon it, as the most learned christians. They are able, therefore, to give a good reason of the hope that is them, and to tell why they are not atheists, nor deists, nor mere nominal, but real christians. There have been a vast many more unlearned than learned christians who have sealed their faith with their blood, and laid down their lives in testimony of the truth and divinity of the gospel; which is the highest evidence they could give of their well grounded hope of eternal life.

5. If christians know that they are christians, by the spirit which they have received from God, then sinners may know that they are sinners, by the spirit of the world, which reigns within them, and governs all their conduct. They are more constantly and entirely under the dominion of a selfish spirit, than christians are under a benevolent spirit. They have clear, constant and full evidence, that they are sinners, and that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts, is evil and only evil continually. But though they always act from selfishness, and invariably seek their own good solely and supremely, yet their selfishness, which is desperately wicked, is at the same time deceitful above all things. The selfishness of Satan sometimes disposes him to put on the appearance of an angel of light; and so the selfishness of sinners sometimes leads them to put on the appearance of the children of light, and to do the same things that christians do. By this they often deceive themselves as well as others, and really doubt whether they are sinners, or whether there is any essential difference between them and real christians. But if they would only form their opinion of themselves by internal motives, instead of their external conduct, they would find no ground to doubt of their having the spirit of the world, and always acting from entirely selfish and sinful motives, which are directly contrary to the spirit of benevolence, which is of God, and which governs the hearts and conduct of real christians. There are probably many more doubting sinners, than doubting christians;

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but neither have any good reason for doubting, for they both might know what manner of spirit they are of, and in what path they are walking. Doubting sinners are in a most dangerous and deplorable condition. They are in doubt whether they are walking in the strait and narrow path to eternal life, or whether they are walking in the broad road to ruin. They are in darkness, and see no light, and know not at what they stumble. No human means can remove their darkness and ignorance, and give them that light and knowledge, which arises from the spirit which is of God. No truths which can be exhibited before their eyes, no addresses that can be made to their understandings, and no convictions that can be produced in their consciences, by the common influences of the divine Spirit, can remove their ignorance, and give them that peculiar knowledge which comes from God, and can make them wise unto salvation. They are in a morally helpless and hopeless condition, and nothing can prevent their lying down in everlasting darkness and despair, but the sovereign and unpromised mercy of God.

6. If christians have received the spirit which is of God, and which gives them a peculiar knowledge of spiritual and divine things, then the world have no reason to think it strange that they treat them according to their enlightened views and feelings. They have no reason to think it strange that christians, whose hearts are purified, and whose understandings are enlightened, hate their selfish spirit, which God hates; condemn their vain and sinful ways, which God condemns; avoid their company, which God requires them to avoid; and use every proper method to restrain, reform, and convert them from the error of their ways, which God has commanded them to use. They possess a spirit that is in direct contrariety to the spirit of the world; and they cannot act consistently, unless they manifest their spirit, and condemn and oppose that which the men of the world highly esteem, but which is an abomination in the sight of God. Though sinners often complain of christians for their strictness, they have no reason to complain, but ought to be thankful for their admonitions and restraints.

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SERMON LVIII.

THE TRUE CHARACTER OF GOOD MEN DELINEATED.

For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. — Romans, vii. 18.

It is a question among expositors whether the apostle is here expressing the pious feelings of his own heart, or whether he is describing the feelings of a person destitute of grace. To determine this point, it seems necessary to examine the context, which is the best way to discover his true meaning. From the seventh to the ninth verse he describes the exercises of his own mind, before he was awakened from his carnal ease and stupidity. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Nay, I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin taking occasion by the commandment wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once." This exactly agrees with another description which he gives of himself, while in the state of nature. "If any man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." Such was his character and his opinion of himself, before he knew the grace of God in truth. But after his conversion, his views and feelings were totally altered. And this change he described, from the ninth to the eleventh verse. "But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin taking occasion by the com-

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mandment, deceived me, and by it slew me." What follows in this chapter is a description of himself as a real, though imperfect saint. "Wherefore the law is holy; and the commandment holy and just and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Who can doubt either that the apostle is here speaking of himself, or that he is speaking of himself as a real christian? He says, he does not allow of any evil in himself, but sincerely wishes to avoid all sin. This is more than any unrenewed sinner can sincerely say, after he has been awakened to see his own heart. The apostle, therefore, must be speaking of his own gracious exercises in these verses. And if this be true, it is easy to understand what he means in the words which have been selected as the foundation of the ensuing discourse. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." This is the language of every christian who can sincerely say, I desire to be perfectly holy; but I find by daily experience, that I fall short of such a desirable attainment. Agreeably, therefore, to the spirit of the text, I shall show,

I. That saints desire to be perfectly holy.

II. That they are not perfect in holiness.

III. Wherein their imperfection in holiness consists.

I. I am to show that saints desire to be perfectly holy.

Holiness is desirable in its own nature, and none can possess the least degree of it without desiring to possess it in perfection. The truth of this will appear from two things, which are essential to all real saints. One is, that they sincerely love the divine law. The apostle says, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." David frequently makes the same declaration. "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." "I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold." And he says of every good man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." This is the law of perfection, or at least it includes it, which saith to every person, "Thou shalt love the

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Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself." No man can love this law, without desiring that perfect holiness which it absolutely enjoins. Those, therefore, who sincerely desire to obey the law of God in its full extent, must necessarily desire to be entirely conformed to the divine will; which is the perfection of holiness.

Besides, saints not only love the law of perfection, but heartily hate every transgression of it. The apostle expressly declares, that sin is the object of his perfect abhorrence. "For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I *hate*, that do I.—Now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." This is also the language of the pious Psalmist. "I hate vain thoughts." "I hate and abhor lying." "I hate every false way." Such are the feelings of all those who have been renewed in the temper of their minds, and have put off the old man with his deeds. They hate sin in every form, and abhor it in themselves as much as in others. Thus it appears, from the love which good men have to the divine law, and from the hatred which they have to every transgression of it, that they do sincerely desire to be perfectly holy. But yet,

II. They are imperfect in holiness.

The scripture represents the most eminent saints, as falling short of perfection in this life. Solomon says, "There is no man that sinneth not." Again he says, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not." And he scruples not to ask this serious question, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin?" The apostle John asserts, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." These divine declarations concerning the imperfection of good men, entirely harmonize with their own declarations concerning themselves. Job says unto God, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." David bitterly bewails his remaining corruption of heart. "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." When Isaiah had a clear view of the divine purity and majesty, he cried out, "Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Though Paul once thought he was blameless, yet after he became an eminent christian, and was better

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acquainted with his own heart, he had a deep sense of his great imperfection in holiness. He says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Thus it appears from what God says of saints, and from what they say of themselves, that none have attained and none will attain, to perfect holiness in this life.

I proceed to show,

III. Wherein they come short of perfect holiness.

This is a point no less difficult, than important, to determine. There are, however, but three different suppositions to be made concerning the imperfection of saints. The first is, that all their moral exercises are perfectly holy, but too low and languid. The second is, that all their moral exercises are partly holy, and partly sinful. The third is, that some of their moral exercises are perfectly holy, and some are perfectly sinful. Let us examine each of these suppositions distinctly.

First. Let us inquire, whether the imperfection of saints can consist in the mere *weakness* of their holy exercises. Those who embrace this opinion, suppose that saints are always in the exercise of grace, and that all their gracious exercises are perfectly holy. But if this be true, it is extremely difficult to discover wherein they are morally or criminally imperfect. Supposing their affections are indeed low and languid, how does this appear to be a criminal defect or imperfection? There can be no criminality without some positively bad intention or design. But there is no positively bad design or intention in loving either God or man, in a low and languid manner. Though saints are conscious that their love to God and other holy exercises are not so lively and vigorous at one time as at another, yet they never feel to blame merely on account of the weakness or languor of their religious affections. It is impossible in the nature of things, that good men should always have the same high and ardent exercises of grace. The strength, or weakness, of their holy affections, depends on a great variety of causes, which are entirely under the divine control. God often calls them to different duties, places them under different circumstances, and presents different objects to the view of their minds. All these things must have some effect upon their feelings, and serve to strengthen or weaken their exercises of grace. Though our Saviour was as free from moral imperfection at one time as at another, yet his holy and heavenly affections were not always equally strong and vigor-

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ous. Sometimes he was all calmness and serenity; but at other times he seems to be in raptures. At one time, he groaned in spirit; but at another, he rejoiced in spirit. At one time, he appeared to be in an ecstacy of joy; but at another, to be in an agony of sorrow. Hence it is evident that his holy affections were sometimes higher and sometimes lower, and yet always entirely free from the least moral defect or imperfection. This clearly proves that the imperfection of his followers cannot consist in the mere weakness of their gracious exercises.

Besides, saints are conscious of something more than mere languor or coldness in their religious affections. They find in their hearts feelings directly contrary to love, meekness, gentleness, patience, submission, and every other exercise of pure benevolence. Hence they know that their moral imperfection consists in something totally different from mere weakness of holy affections.

Add to this, the impossibility of their feeling a criminal weakness in their truly holy exercises. They cannot tell, nor can they be told, how high their religious affections must be, in order to be perfect. If perfection of holiness consisted in the *height* or *strength* of affection, we might expect to find some standard in scripture, by which to determine whether our holy exercises were perfect or not. But we find no certain degree of strength or ardor in holy affections, which the scripture represents as the only point of perfection. The sacred writers clearly distinguish between holy and unholy affections, but never intimate that one holy affection is more perfect than another. They represent all true love to God as *supreme*. Our Saviour says, no man can love him truly unless he love him supremely; that is, more than father or mother, brother or sister, wife or children, houses or lands. The truth is, whenever any person really loves God, he loves him for what he is in himself, and consequently he loves him supremely; which is loving him as much as it is possible to love him, with his present attention to, and knowledge of, the divine character. Whoever loves God, loves him with all his heart, and to the extent of his natural capacity. Hence every saint is conscious that he feels perfectly right, so long as he is conscious that he loves God for his real excellence. And he cannot tell, nor can he be told, wherein he is to blame for not feeling a higher or stronger affection towards God, than he actually feels. He knows, and others know, that if he had more knowledge of God, he would have more love to him. For every holy affection is measured by the object of the affection. One saint may love God more than another, because one saint may have more knowledge of God than another. And so the same saint may love God

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more at one time than at another, because he has more knowledge of God at one time, than at another; or which is the same thing, he may attend to more of the divine perfections, and to more displays of those perfections, at one time than at another. This is the only difference between the love of saints and the love of angels in heaven. Their knowledge is the measure of their holiness, and not the height or ardor of their affections. For if the height or ardor of their affections was to determine their characters, who could say that any saint or angel was ever perfectly holy? There is no certain height or strength of affection pointed out in scripture, by which we can determine that any creature in the universe loves God enough. Hence it is very evident that the moral imperfection of saints in this life, cannot consist in the mere languor, coldness, or weakness of their gracious exercises.

Secondly. Let us inquire whether their imperfection can arise from their moral affections being *partly holy and partly sinful.* If their affections were of such a mixed nature, they certainly would be criminally imperfect. For, if each of their moral affections could be partly holy and partly sinful, then each would have something in it of moral perfection and of moral imperfection. But can we conceive of such a mixture of moral good and evil, in one and the same exercise of heart? Let us pursue the inquiry. Can the affection of love be partly love and partly hatred to God? Can the exercise of repentance be partly love and partly hatred to sin? Can the exercise of faith be partly love and partly hatred to Christ? Can the grace of submission be partly resignation and partly opposition to the will of God? This is no more conceivable, than that a volition to walk should be partly a desire to move, and partly a desire to stand still. It is absolutely absurd to suppose that any voluntary exercise should be partly holy and partly sinful. But let us consult scripture as well as reason upon this subject. Our Lord declares that "No man can serve God and mammon." The apostle James asserts that "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." And the apostle John says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." These declarations suppose that saints cannot have affections partly holy and partly sinful. For if they could, they might love God and mammon at the same time. We read, "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." This character must belong to the best saint in the world, if all his affections are partly holy and partly sinful. He must obey and disobey God in all his ways. And, upon this supposition, how can any saint ever determine, whether he is more criminal at one time than another? or whether he ever loves God supreme-

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ly? If all his affections are partly holy and partly sinful, how can he determine, whether any one of his affections has more holiness than sin in it? Or how can he determine that he ever loves God more than he hates him? He can find no rule in the Bible to judge by; and if he depends upon his feelings, these, by the supposition, are always partly sinful, and consequently partial. But do christians, in fact, find such a difficulty in determining whether they are more criminal at one time than at another? or whether they love God less at one time than another? We venture to say that they do not. They find a sensible difference in the *nature* of their affections, at different times; and this affords them their best evidence that they are real friends to God, and stand entitled to his favor. The notion, therefore, that the imperfection of saints arises from their moral affections being all partly holy and partly sinful, is contrary to reason, scripture, and their own experience. But,

Thirdly. If the moral imperfection of good men cannot arise from their affections being too low and languid, nor from their being partly holy and partly sinful, then it must follow that their imperfection arises from their having some sinful as well as some *holy* affections. If all their moral exercises were perfectly holy, they could not be justly considered as morally imperfect creatures in this life, any more than in the next. But if only a part of their moral exercises are perfectly holy, and the rest are perfectly sinful, then they are criminally imperfect. For all unholy affections in them are no less, if they are not more criminal, than they would be in other men. But to make it more fully appear that the imperfection of saints does consist in the inconstancy of their holy affections, or in their having some bad as well as some good affections, I would observe,

1. That saints do have some perfectly good affections. God, who knows their hearts, approves of some of their affections. He approved of Abel's faith. He approved of Abraham's self denial. He approved of David's good design of building the Temple. And we find many other instances of God's approving of the desires, affections and purposes of good men. But God is of purer eyes than to approve of any thing really sinful. There must be, therefore, some perfectly holy affections in the hearts of saints. And this they know to be true, by their own experience. They are conscious of loving God, and of desiring to promote his glory. Joshua was conscious of such exercises, when he said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Peter appears to have been conscious of sincere love to Christ, when he answered his trying question, with so much solemnity and confidence: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all

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things; thou knowest that I love thee." Paul also was conscious of having some right affection of heart, when he said in the text, "For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." Saints, then, with all their imperfections, have some perfectly right and holy exercises of heart, which meet the approbation of God and of their own consciences. But,

2. It is no less evident, that they have some affections which are altogether unholy and sinful. These they not only often feel, but often express. Moses was angry; for he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Hezekiah was proud; for his heart was lifted up, and he boasted of his riches. And David acknowledges that he was envious at the prosperity of the wicked. All saints are conscious of having such affections as these, which are perfectly sinful. And all their moral imperfection consists in such positively evil exercises of heart. For,

3. There is nothing else, which prevents their being as perfectly holy and free from sin, as the saints and angels in heaven. This the apostle most clearly illustrates by his own feelings. He was capable of observing the inward motions and exercises of his mind, and of relating them clearly and intelligibly. Let us hear what he says in the text and context. "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do." "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." Here the apostle tells us that he had good affections sometimes, and then he really desired and intended to do good; but yet he did not fulfil his resolutions. The reason was, that when the time came in which he intended to do certain good deeds, evil affections were present with him, and prevented him from doing the duties which he had previously resolved to do. His bad affections prevented his having good affections. For, if his good affections had continued, nothing could have prevented him from performing what he had intended to perform. According to his own account of the exercises of his heart, his good exercises excluded bad ones, and his bad affections excluded good ones. His holy affections were inconstant, being interrupted by the intervention of opposite views and feelings. He complains of nothing but bad exercises of heart, and seems to be confident, that, if these only could be removed, he should be perfectly holy and happy. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It farther appears from what he says concerning his different affections, that his holy and sinful exercises were entirely distinct from each other. "If then I

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do that which I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." His meaning cannot be, that he did what he would not, in the time of acting. For this would imply, that he did not act voluntarily; that is, did not act at all. He must intend, therefore, by this mode of expression, that he voluntarily did what he had before determined not to do; or that he freely violated his own virtuous resolutions. This, indeed, is the natural consequence of having good affections and bad affections one after another, in alternate succession. If now we may judge of other saints by Paul, we may safely conclude that their moral imperfection wholly consists in their positively sinful exercises of heart. And this is agreeable to the whole current of scripture, which represents holiness as excluding sin, and sin as excluding holiness, in the human heart. When God predicted the conversion of the Jews in Babylon, he promised to *take away* their stony hearts *by giving* them hearts of flesh. And when saints are exhorted to grow in grace, they are commanded to put away bad affections, by exercising good ones. Thus we read, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The apostle says to the christians at Corinth, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." This supposes that the increase of holiness would necessarily be the decrease of sin. The same idea the apostle more fully expresses in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We find a similar exhortation to saints in the third chapter of Colossians. "But now ye also put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." And in order to this, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God,—bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering." "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." The apostle Peter also speaks in nearly the same language to all true believers. "And besides this," says he, "add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound," that is, continue, "they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful." The plain import of all these exhortations is, that if saints were only free from all sinful exercises, they would be perfectly holy; and that the only way to be free from all sinful exercises is, to live in the constant exercise of holy

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affections. Here then, the express declaration of the apostle Paul comes in with peculiar weight and authority. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." So long as ye exercise holy affections, sinful ones shall find no place in your hearts. Hence it clearly appears that all the imperfection of saints consists in positively evil affections, and not in the languor, or defect, of their truly holy and gracious exercises.

Though this may be a just and scriptural account of the imperfection of saints, yet since some very plausible objections may be made against it, they shall be treated with all the respect they deserve.

It may be said that saints are not conscious of such an alternate succession in their good and bad exercises, as has been represented; and, therefore, it is to be presumed that their good and bad exercises are united and blended together.

It has been observed in this discourse, that sin and holiness are diametrically opposite affections, and cannot be united in one and the same volition. And it has been farther observed, that the scripture represents them as totally distinct exercises of heart. These considerations afford a much stronger proof that all holy affections are distinct from all unholy ones, than the mere want of consciousness of this distinction affords to the contrary. We all know that our thoughts are extremely rapid in their succession. We cannot ascertain how many thoughts we have in one hour, nor even in one minute. And our affections, or volitions, *may be* as rapid in their succession as our thoughts; yea, it is very evident that they are too rapid for observation. For, though we never act without a motive, yet we often act without being able, the next moment after action, to tell the motive from which we acted. This shows that the succession in our volitions, as well as in our thoughts, is sometimes too rapid to be distinctly remarked. Let it be admitted, then, that saints are not always conscious of the alternate succession of holy and unholy exercises in their own minds, yet this will not prove that there is no such succession. The plain reason is, the succession is too rapid to be observed. If any are disposed to doubt the force of this answer, let them try to distinguish the succession of their own thoughts and volitions, and it is presumed they will be convinced of its being utterly impracticable. Of course, they will be obliged to renounce the objection arising from experience, against the alternate succession of virtuous and sinful exercises in the minds of true believers.

It may be said that, according to the tenor of this discourse, saints may be sometimes entirely holy and sometimes entirely sinful. But this is extremely absurd; because, if it be true,

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then saints are sometimes sinners, and just like the rest of the wicked world.

This objection is more ambiguous than pertinent. Saint signifies a holy, and sinner a sinful character. But a single volition, or a single external action, does not form a character, which is always founded on a course of conduct. One man is called industrious, and another is called idle. But the character of the industrious man is founded on a general habit, and not on a particular instance of industry; and the character of the idle man is founded on a general habit, and not on a particular instance of idleness. These cases will apply to saints and sinners. A saint is one who habitually obeys, though he sometimes disobeys, the divine commands. A sinner is one who habitually disobeys God, and never does any thing pleasing in his sight. Though a saint, therefore, may sometimes feel and act just like a sinner, yet he deserves not the character of a sinner, because he habitually feels and acts very differently from a total enemy to God. An industrious man may be idle, and feel and act just like an idle man, for a few moments or a few hours; but it would be extremely absurd to give him the character of an idle man, on account of such particular instances of idleness. He has the habit of industry, and will continue habitually industrious through the course of his life. So the saint, who is imperfect, and sometimes feels and acts like a sinner, will continue habitually holy and obedient to the end of his days. Now the scripture characterizes saints and sinners upon the ground of their habitual feelings and conduct; and, therefore, saints do not forfeit their character by their moral imperfection, though it consists in feeling and acting sometimes like sinners. It is probable the divine constitution does not admit of any long interval between one holy exercise and another, in the hearts of saints. Perhaps they seldom neglect any duty, or commit any transgression, without having some holy exercises, which condemn and oppose their sinful feelings and conduct. It is to be presumed that they never live months, nor weeks, nor days, destitute of right affections. And very often their holy and unholy exercises are as nearly coëxistent as they can be. But though there may be some moments or hours, in which they are totally sinful, as well as some in which they are entirely holy, yet such sinful seasons do not in the least militate against their christian character, but only exhibit painful evidence that they are really in a state of moral imperfection.

It may be said, that if saints are sometimes totally destitute of gracious affections, then they actually fall from grace; which is contrary to the general tenor of scripture.

We have, indeed, sufficient evidence in the word of God,

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that all true believers, who have been regenerated and justified, shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. But this may be true, though the imperfection of saints consists in positively evil exercises, which for the time exclude holy affections. It is the constitution of God, that where he has given one holy exercise, he will give another, and another, until the subject of grace is ripened for heaven. But God has no where promised, that such gracious exercises in the heart of the true believer shall never be interrupted by sinful ones. It is, therefore, no more inconsistent with the certainty of the final salvation of saints, that their exercises of grace are sometimes interrupted, than that they are sometimes low and languid. God can as easily renew a train of holy exercises after it has been interrupted, as he can revive or strengthen a train of low and languishing affections. The truth is, the final salvation of all true believers depends upon God's working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure; and therefore their salvation is absolutely certain, whether he constantly produces holy affections in their hearts, or whether he sometimes withdraws his gracious influences from them. It is sufficient for them to be assured, that "He who has begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

But it may be still farther said, that all true believers have a principle of grace, which was implanted in regeneration, and which will not admit of their being totally destitute of holiness for a single moment.

In answer to this objection, it seems necessary to examine the principal passages of scripture, upon which it is founded. They are such as the following: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things."

Here it is natural to remark, in the first place, that these texts cannot mean that a principle of holiness is implanted in the mind in regeneration. For holiness is love; and love requires no other principles than those of moral agency, which are common to all moral agents. A sinner has no need of a new natural principle, in order to exercise holy affections; nor is any such principle required. All that the divine law requires of any man is the exercise of true love, or universal benevolence.

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This will be shown in a succeeding discourse.* If these texts, therefore, do not prove that saints have a gracious principle, then they do not prove that they are always in the actual possession and exercise of grace.

The next remark is, that the passages under consideration prove too much, and of consequence, prove nothing to the purpose for which they are brought. They prove, if taken literally, that when the heart of flesh is given, the heart of stone is totally and finally removed; that when a man is born of the Spirit, all his moral exercises become spiritual, or truly holy; that when a man is made a new creature, all his old sinful exercises are done away, and all his moral affections become new; that when the treasure of the heart is made good, nothing but pure holiness or moral goodness can proceed from it. In a word, they prove that when once the good seed is sown in the heart, it remains, and produces nothing but good fruit. But how is all this consistent with the truth which has been established in this discourse, and which is granted by all who plead for a principle of grace — that saints are in a state of imperfection and have the remains of moral corruption? We must, therefore, look for some different interpretation of these figurative expressions of scripture.

This leads us to observe, in the last place, that these texts, in their true meaning, support the very sentiment which they are supposed to refute. They plainly intimate that regeneration is the production of real holiness, which is totally distinct from sin, and can never be united or blended with it. For, if the giving of the heart of flesh be the taking away of the heart of stone, then the heart of stone and the heart of flesh are totally distinct; if that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, then flesh and spirit are totally distinct; if a man's becoming a new creature removes all his old exercises, then his new exercises are totally distinct from his old; or if he that is born of God sinneth not, because his seed remaineth in him, then that seed, which our Saviour calls spirit, is totally distinct from such sinful exercises, as, all must allow, more or less prevail in the best of saints. On this supposition, that grace is perfectly pure and entirely distinct from all sinful exercises, all the scripture representations of the renovation of the heart, may be explained in consistency with the moral agency, and with the moral imperfection of good men. It now appears, we trust, that there is no solid objection against the leading sentiment in this discourse, that all the criminal imperfection of saints consists in positively sinful affections.

* Love the essence of obedience. Rom. xiii. 10.—Wherefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

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SERMON LIX.

THE TRUE CHARACTER OF GOOD MEN DELINEATED.

For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. — Romans, vii. 18.

Having shown in the preceding discourse that it is the desire of saints to be perfect; that notwithstanding this desire they are still imperfect; and that their imperfection consists in positively sinful exercises; it only remains to improve the subject, by drawing a number of inferences from it.

1. If the imperfection of saints consists in the *inconstancy* of their holy exercises, then it is their duty to become absolutely perfect. It appears from what has been said, that there is nothing to prevent their reaching perfection in this life, but their own free, voluntary, sinful exercises. They would be entirely sinless, if they would only *continue* to exercise just such holy affections as they sometimes do exercise. If they are able to have one good affection, why not another, and another, without intermission? And if they are able to have a constant series of good affections, why are they not under moral obligation to have such a series, and to be uniformly holy? No reason can be given why they should not be perfect, which will not be as good a reason why they should voluntarily commit sin. But who can believe that saints ought to commit the least iniquity? Though no man has been absolutely perfect in this life, and though it is very evident that no man ever will be so in the present state, yet this affords not the least excuse for the least moral imperfection. It is the indispensable duty of all saints to keep themselves *always* in the love of God, and to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect. They cannot fall short of moral perfection, without exercising

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positively sinful affections, which must be condemned by the divine law, and by their own enlightened consciences.

2. If the present imperfection of saints consists in the inconstancy of their holy exercises, then it is easy to conceive how they will all be equally perfect in a future state. The scripture assures us that all true believers will be perfectly pure, as soon as they are absent from the body and present with the Lord. We read, that there shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven "any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Those who have already reached the mansions of the blessed, are called "the spirits of just men made perfect." And the apostle tells us, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." But how can all true saints become thus equally perfect, the moment they arrive at the kingdom of glory? They will enter into the regions of light with unequal capacities, with unequal knowledge, and with unequal reasons of gratitude and praise. These inequalities must lay a foundation for an inequality of holiness to all eternity. How then can they all be equally perfect while they are unequally holy? The answer to this is easy, if their imperfection will cease the moment their sinful exercises cease, and if their perfection will commence the moment their holy exercises become constant and uninterrupted. And this will certainly be the case if their present imperfection wholly consists in the inconstancy of their holy exercises. We must suppose that all their positively sinful exercises will cease, before they are admitted into the immediate presence of God; and as soon as these cease, their holy affections will of course become constant; and that constancy of perfectly holy exercises must constitute sinless perfection. In this way the least saint will be as perfect as the greatest; and the greatest will be as perfect the first moment he enters the gates of paradise, as he ever will be in any period of eternity. Though all the inhabitants of heaven will incessantly make advances in holiness, yet none will make advances in perfection, which essentially and necessarily consists in the constant exercise of holy affections.

3. If the imperfection of saints be owing, not to the weakness but to the inconstancy of their holy exercises, then there is a propriety in their being called perfect, notwithstanding they are far from being free from moral corruption. The scripture both directly and indirectly represents all good men as perfect. We read, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations." It is said of Job, "That man was perfect and upright." We are told, "God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers." The Psalmist says, "Mark the

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perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." Solomon observes, "The upright shall dwell in the land, and the perfect shall remain in it." He says again, "The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way; but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness." That the word perfect is here used in a strict and proper sense, appears from other texts, in which saints are represented as having a perfect heart. We read, "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord all his days." Hezekiah pleads the perfection of his own heart before God. "I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart." The prophet also said, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."

Now, if all good men have some holy exercises which are entirely pure and free from sin, there is a strict propriety in calling them perfect, notwithstanding all their remaining impurity and imperfection. Their perfectly holy affections render it as proper to call them perfect, as their totally sinful affections render it proper to call them imperfect. Since they have some entirely right affections, they may be truly called blameless, harmless, sincere, undefiled, and pure in heart. But if their holy affections were always too low and languid, or were always mixed with moral impurity, then no moral perfection could belong to their character. And if this were true, there could be no propriety in calling them perfect, or in using any expressions which convey this idea. But if all their moral exercises are perfectly holy, except those which are totally sinful, then it is altogether proper that they should be characterized by their best affections, which constitute their moral beauty and real perfection.

4. If the imperfection of saints consists in the inconstancy of their holy exercises, then it is easy to account for their spiritual declensions. It is no uncommon thing for good men to go backward, instead of going forward in religion. This is generally ascribed to the languor and weakness of their gracious exercises, or to the want of strength and vigor in their gracious principle. But it is extremely difficult to account for such coldness and barrenness in christians, if all their moral exercises are pure and holy, or if they always have a principle of grace, upon which divine objects must always make some good impression. It is, therefore, much more reasonable to suppose that their spiritual declension is owing to the increase of positively sinful exercises. For, as these increase, gracious exercises must necessarily decrease. They cannot love God, while they are loving the world; they cannot serve God while they are serving

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mammon; and they cannot mind spiritual, while they are minding earthly things. Spiritual declension ought, in all cases, to be ascribed entirely to the fewness of gracious exercises. As natural coldness in winter is not owing to the distance of the sun from the earth, but to the fewness and oblique direction of the rays which fall upon it; so spiritual coldness, formality, and deadness in religion is not owing to the languor of holy exercises, but to the fewness and interruption of right affections. Saints know by experience, that, while their attention is fixed on divine objects and not diverted, and while their holy affections continue uniform and uninterrupted, they find the greatest satisfaction and enjoyment in the duties of devotion. But while they mind earthly things, and eagerly pursue worldly objects and enjoyments, they find their graces languish, and they grow cold and dead to every thing of a spiritual and divine nature. As they generally grow warm and lively in religion as fast as their holy exercises increase, so they generally grow cold and dull, as fast as their love to God is interrupted by their love to the world. They never stand still, but always go either forward or backward in their religious course. When they go forward, they go forward of choice; and when they go backward they go backward of choice. Their declension is altogether voluntary, and entirely owing to their positively sinful exercises. It is true, indeed, spiritual light and comfort do not always keep pace with their growth in grace; nor do spiritual darkness and distress always follow their declension in religion. The reason is, light and darkness, comfort and distress, do not immediately depend upon their will, but upon the nature of those manifestations, which God is pleased to make to their minds. Though they commonly enjoy more light and comfort while they are making progress in holiness, yet they sometimes grow in grace very fast, while they are denied the peculiar manifestations of the divine favor. And though they are commonly involved in greater darkness while they are declining in grace, yet their declension is sometimes attended with more stupidity, than darkness and distress of mind. Hence they ought to measure their growth in grace by the increase of holy affections, and not by the increase of spiritual light and comfort. And, on the other hand, they ought to measure their declension in religion, by the increase of sinful affections, and not by the increase of spiritual darkness and distress. For, however things may appear to themselves, they actually decline more and more in religion, the more and more they live in the exercise of sinful affections.

5. If saints, in their present imperfect state, are constantly liable to positively sinful exercises, then they are constantly

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dependent upon God, to carry on a work of sanctification in their hearts. Their gracious exercises are not necessarily and inseparably connected with each other, and, of consequence, may at any time be interrupted by totally sinful affections. They have no permanent source or fountain of holiness within themselves, from which a constant stream of holy affections will naturally and necessarily flow. As one holy affection will not produce another, so they are immediately dependent upon God for every holy affection. The moment he withdraws his gracious influence, their gracious exercises cease, and sinful exercises instantly succeed. And in this case, they are no more able to renew the train of holy affections, than they were to begin it at first. Their sanctification, therefore, is precisely the same as continued regeneration. Accordingly the apostle Paul represents himself and all other christians, as constantly dependent upon a divine influence for the continuation and growth of grace. He says, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." Again: "Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." And again: "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Again he says: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption;" and "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." But though God has promised to give saints the influences of his Spirit to produce holy affections in their hearts, and prepare them for future and eternal blessedness, yet he has not promised that such divine influences shall be constant, but has reserved the power of withdrawing them, whenever he pleases. This shows that christians are constantly and immediately dependent upon God, to keep up a train of holy exercises in their hearts; and when it is broken by the intervention of sinful affections, to renew it again. The preparations of their heart, as well as the answer of their tongue, is from the Lord. It depends upon God, who has begun a good work in their hearts, to carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. He only can make them perfect in every good work to do his will, working in them that which is well pleasing in his sight.

6. If saints, in their present state of imperfection, are subjects of both holy and unholy affections, then it is evident that there is a foundation in their minds for what is commonly called the christian warfare. This is peculiar to all real christians. It never takes place in the unregenerate, but always takes place in those who are born again. It is a warfare, not between the heart and conscience, but between holy and unholy affections.

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Sinners often feel a conflict between the motions of the heart and the dictates of conscience. For when their conscience is awake, it always condemns all their sinful desires and pursuits. There is, however, no real virtue in such a conflict between the selfish desires of the heart, and the remonstrances of conscience, though it rise ever so high, or continue ever so long. But the christian warfare always implies something truly holy and acceptable to God. Hence the apostle speaks of it as an evidence of his having some right desires and affections of heart; "For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not."

Now, if saints have some perfectly holy and some totally sinful exercises, then it is easy to discover the ground of the christian warfare. For sin and holiness are diametrically opposite in their nature, and perfectly hate and oppose each other. While saints are in the exercise of holiness, they hate all sinful affections with a perfect hatred. So long, therefore, as two such opposite kinds of affection alternately exist in their minds, they must be subject to a most sensible and painful conflict. But did their imperfection consist in the mere languor of their holy affections, or in their holy affections being partly unholy, without any distinct and opposite sinful exercises, there could be no ground for a spiritual warfare. Though their holy affections were too weak and languid, yet this could afford no ground for their opposing each other. And though each holy affection were partly sinful, yet this could afford no ground for the same affection to oppose itself. But if the leading sentiment in this discourse be true, that saints have some perfectly holy and some totally sinful affections; then there appears to be a sufficient ground for a spiritual conflict in their hearts, as long as they remain imperfectly sanctified.

Hence the apostle Paul, who treats more largely upon the christian warfare than any other inspired writer, represents it as a mutual opposition between holy and unholy affections. He spends a great part of the chapter which contains the text, in describing the spiritual conflict which he had felt in his own breast. The description follows: "For we know that the law is spiritual," it requires nothing but holy and spiritual affections, "but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good." So far as I am in the exercise of grace, I always see and approve the goodness of the law. "Now then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Whenever I do any thing which is sinful, I act contrary to those holy affections which form my christian character. "For I know that in me,

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that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." I know that when the train of holy exercises is interrupted, then my affections are altogether sinful. "For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." While the train of holy exercises continues, I desire, I resolve, I determine, to do nothing but what is right. But I often find this train of holy exercises is broken, and then I feel averse to those duties, which I sincerely intended to perform. "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." If I always do right, while grace is in exercise, then when I do wrong, it must be wholly ascribed to my totally sinful feelings, which, in my happy moments, I always abhor and resist. "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Though I resolve to do good at some future period, yet when that period arrives, evil is present with me, and I neglect that which I had previously intended to do. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." It is my habitual* disposition to approve and love every divine precept. "But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" My sinful affections I call the law of sin, and my holy affections I call the law of my mind. These two opposite kinds of affection are at variance with each other; and when my sinful affections prevail, I feel myself a captive, in bondage under sin. I know I am acting against the law of my mind, my inward man, my former desires and resolutions; but I find by painful experience, that none but God can break the voluntary cords of my iniquity, and deliver me from the love and dominion of those sins which easily beset me. O wretched man that I am, to be always exposed to the power and guilt of moral corruptions! Such a conflict between nature and grace the apostle experienced in his own breast; and such a conflict he represents as common to all christians; for he says to believers in general, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

If this be a just description of the mutual opposition between perfectly holy and totally sinful affections in the hearts of saints, then it may properly be called a *warfare*. For it obliges them to

* Since habit always refers to some mental or bodily exercises, and not to principles of action, there is a propriety in calling a train of gracious exercises *habitual*, whether they originate from a principle of grace, or not.

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be always on their guard, and to keep their hearts with all diligence, in order to repel the assaults and intrusion of sinful motions and affections. While they are in the exercise of grace, they habitually dread the approaching enemy, and watch his appearances, lest they should be taken by surprise. Such watching and guarding is essential to the christian warfare, in which victory consists in keeping the ground. As soon as sinful affections take place in the hearts of christians, they are actually conquered. Indeed, that train of affections, whether good or bad, which exists in their hearts, is the conqueror for the time being. If good and bad affections could both exist in the mind at the same instant, and oppose each other ever so powerfully, it does not appear that either could ever gain the ascendancy. But if sin and holiness cannot exist at the same instant in the same mind, then either the one or the other must gain the victory, by taking possession of the ground. The only way, therefore, in which believers can keep out of spiritual bondage, is to keep themselves in the love of God. But since they are dependent upon a divine influence to do this, and since that influence may be withdrawn, they are always in danger of being surprised into sin. This renders the christian warfare extremely painful and extremely dangerous. Saints are soldiers for life, and nothing but death can discharge them from their spiritual warfare.

7. If the imperfection of true believers be owing to the inconstancy of their gracious exercises, then they are able to attain to *a full assurance* of their good estate, notwithstanding all their remaining corruptions. They are required to make their calling and election sure. It is their duty to know the true state of their minds. They ought to be thankful to God for his special grace, and perform all the peculiar duties which he has enjoined upon his children. But many seem to think it is out of their power to attain assurance, and plead the deceitfulness and corruption of their hearts as an excuse for not knowing whether they are really the friends or enemies of God. And did moral imperfection consist in the mere weakness of holy affections, or in their being mixed with moral impurity, it seems as though weak christians, at least, could not determine their own true character. For, there is no rule in the word of God, by which they can ascertain the point, whether their holy exercises are sufficiently strong and vigorous to denominate them real saints. But if moral imperfection consists in the inconstancy of perfectly holy affections, then they may certainly determine that they are the subjects of special grace. For every holy affection they have is totally distinct from every sinful affection, and affords an infallible evidence of a renovation of heart. Whoever has

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true love, or true repentance, or true faith, or true submission, is born again, and has the witness within himself that he is a true child of God. Though these affections may be interrupted by contrary exercises, yet they still remain an infallible evidence of a saving change. And, as this evidence exists in every real saint, so every real saint may discover it. For, since perfectly holy exercises are entirely distinct from perfectly sinful exercises, and since these two kinds of affection are diametrically opposite in their nature, the conscience is able to distinguish the least holy affection from any sinful exercise. Hence the weakest christian may discover that infallible evidence of grace which actually exists in his own heart, and which may give him assurance of his gracious state. Though he may feel and lament great moral corruption, and though his sinful exercises may very often interrupt his holy affections, yet still he may discover that train of holy exercises which is an infallible evidence of a renovation of heart.

This is the way in which good men in all ages have attained to assurance. Paul spake the language of assurance, when he sincerely declared, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." This was as much as to say, though I often fall short of my duty; though I am often in bondage, sold under sin; and though I am prone to break my best resolutions; yet I know that I sometimes love the law of God, and that I sometimes heartily delight to do his will. And these exercises afford me full assurance that I am a true penitent and sound believer. Peter offended grievously, and discovered great corruption of heart; but yet when the train of holy exercises was renewed, he could appeal to Christ, and say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Job was fully assured of his good estate, while his friends accused him of hypocrisy. He knew that he loved God for what he was in himself, because he could heartily bless him for his frowns as well as for his smiles. Nor did his cursing the day of his birth destroy his assurance; for this could not invalidate the evidence in his favor, arising from the perfectly holy affections which he had often been conscious of feeling and expressing.

If we now look into the New Testament, we shall there find that the primitive christians attained to full assurance, by a consciousness of having pure and holy affections. The apostle John dwells largely upon this subject in his first epistle. In the second chapter he says, "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." Again he says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life; because we love the brethren." He goes on and says, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in

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truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us." He pursues the subject farther and asserts, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." To give an emphasis to these declarations, the apostle expressly says that he wrote this epistle on purpose to teach christians how to attain assurance of their title to heaven. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

Thus it appears that it is the *reality* of holy affections, and not the *constancy* of them, which affords true believers an infallible evidence of their being born of God. Whenever they discover truly benevolent exercises, they discover certain evidence of a change of heart. For holiness in every degree of it is the fruit of the Spirit. And this evidence cannot be invalidated by moral imperfection, because it is accordant with the character of saints in this life that they should have the remains of moral corruption, or that their holy exercises should be sometimes interrupted by positively sinful affections. Though a single, solitary, holy exercise might be more easily overlooked, yet a succession of holy exercises may be readily and clearly discerned. Hence a succession of holy exercises, which always takes place in every regenerate person, may afford every real saint full assurance of his good estate. Let all professors of religion, and especially those that are in doubt of their sincerity, follow the apostle's direction. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you," that is, his spirit, "except ye be reprobates?"

8. Since the imperfection of saints consists in the inconstancy of their holy affections, they need to be much in prayer for divine influence and assistance. They find that their hearts are extremely deceitful, and prone to go astray. They find that all the objects around them are apt to divert their attention and their affections from heavenly and divine things. They find that after they have had the nearest approaches to God, and the most intimate communion with him, their hearts are bent upon backsliding, and ready to pursue every object of vanity. They are weak, dependent, inconstant, inconsistent creatures. They perpetually need divine influence, to keep their hearts, to maintain uniformity of affections, and to give them that peace

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of mind which the world cannot give. In view of this, Seneca, a heathen philosopher, was very sensible of the importance of prayer. "Ask," says he, "at the hand of God a good mind; and first of all pray unto him for the health of thy spirit; and next for the health of thy body." When the blood is either accelerated or retarded in its motion, or when the bones are either broken or dislocated, the body is unfitted for every duty and enjoyment. But a disordered mind is much more intolerable, than a disordered body. The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear? When the affections are interrupted, and thrown into tumult and convulsion, saints are unfitted for thinking, reading, praying, or the performing of any other duty. They are exposed to every temptation from within and from without. They can enjoy no peace nor satisfaction until their affections are rectified, and their souls return unto God, their only proper rest. Their moral imperfection, therefore, arising from the inconstancy of their holy exercises, perpetually impels them to call upon God, for either preventing, or preserving, or restoring mercy. It was a realizing sense of the inconstancy and deceitfulness of their own hearts, which led the ancient saints to give themselves unto prayer for divine instruction, guidance, and influence. This appears from the peculiar modes of expression which they used in their addresses to God. David prays in a strain very singular and striking. "Who can understand *his errors?* cleanse thou me from secret faults. *Keep back* thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have *dominion* over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." "*Create* in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. *Restore* unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." "*Incline my heart* unto thy testimonies, and *not to covetousness.* Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." "Order my steps in thy word; and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." "Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity." In most of these passages, David is to be considered as speaking the general language of the Old Testament church; which language is exactly agreeable to that daily petition which Christ taught his disciples. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Though a hypocrite will not always call upon God, yet every sincere christian, who realizes the inconstancy and deceitfulness

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of his own heart, will feel the propriety and necessity of complying with that divine precept, "Pray without ceasing."

9. If the imperfection of saints consists in the inconstancy of their holy exercises, then they are, notwithstanding their imperfection, *essentially different* from sinners. The present imperfection of saints has led some very ingenious men to imagine that the comparative difference between saints and sinners is extremely small; and that they will not be treated so very differently in a future state, as is generally supposed. This is the opinion of Mr. Paley, a very ingenious and perspicuous writer. He cannot admit that the lowest saint will be perfectly blessed, while the best sinner will be perfectly miserable, in a future and eternal state. He has conjectured, therefore, that there will be but very little difference between the future and eternal condition of the lowest saint, and that of the most moral and amiable sinner. But if the imperfection of saints in this life entirely consists in the inconstancy of their holy exercises, then their moral character is essentially different from the moral character of sinners. They have some perfectly holy and benevolent affections, of which all sinners are totally destitute. They need nothing but constancy in their gracious exercises, in order to render them as perfect as Gabriel, or even as their Father who is in heaven. There is, therefore, not merely a gradual, but an essential difference between the saint who has but one spark of saving grace, and the best sinner on earth, who has nothing but selfish and sinful affections. Upon this ground, the inspired writers distinguish gracious and graceless persons by the most opposite appellations; such as the godly and ungodly, the holy and unholy, the righteous and unrighteous, the friends and the enemies of God. But Christ sets the essential difference between saints and sinners in the most plain and intelligible light. He brings the matter to a point, and decides it in the most unequivocal terms. For he absolutely declares, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." And again, "He that is not against us is on our part." "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, Verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." This decision of the supreme and final Judge puts it beyond doubt that there is an essential difference between every saint and every sinner; and that every saint will be finally and eternally rewarded, while every sinner will be finally and eternally punished.

10. Since all saints are imperfect in this life, the world ought not to question their *sincerity*, on account of their inconstancy. Many are ready to call in question the sincerity of saints, be-

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cause they are not constant and uniform in fulfilling their own engagements, and in obeying the divine commands. But if they are imperfect, it is to be expected that they will manifest the inconstancy of their right affections, and discover some wrong feelings towards God and their fellow men. This has always been the case, with respect to the best saints whose characters are recorded in scripture. They were not constant and uniform in their obedience to God, but sometimes felt and acted like sinners. The same thing is still to be expected of those who are now the real but inconstant friends of God. Though they are inconstant, yet they are sincere; though they have some perfectly wrong, yet they have some perfectly right affections. They really love and obey God, though they fall far short of that perfection in holiness, which they ought to have now, and which they will most certainly attain hereafter. It is, therefore, no less unreasonable, than dangerous, for sinners to "eat up the sins of God's people," and build their hopes, as well as form their excuses, upon the criminal defects and imperfections of the excellent of the earth.

11. Since all saints are imperfect in the present state, they have abundant reason for humiliation and self abasement. They have been extremely inconstant, inconsistent and criminal, in their views and feelings. Though they have had some right affections and sincere desires to glorify God, yet they have been as unstable as water in their good purposes, resolutions and designs. Their imperfections have attended them every day and every where, in all their secular employments, and religious duties. How many worldly affections have crept into their hearts, while they have been necessarily engaged in worldly concerns! How much have they been conformed to the manners and spirit of the world, while they have been called to mix and converse with the men of the world! How often have their remaining corruptions disturbed their thoughts and affections, in the devotions of the closet, of the family, and of the house of God! Could the contrariety and inconsistency of their feelings and conduct be painted to their own view, as they have actually appeared to the Searcher of hearts, they would blush and be ashamed not only of their hours of labor and amusement, but of their more solemn seasons of retirement, meditation and prayer. Their sins are not only great and numerous, but exceedingly aggravated. They have broken the most sacred and solemn obligations, and greatly injured those whom they ought to have treated with a peculiar affection and regard. Such criminal imperfections call for deep humiliation and self abasement. They ought to loathe and abhor themselves, when they reflect how much they have offended God,

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how much they have wounded Christ in the house of his friends, how much they have resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit, how much they have weakened the hands and discouraged the hearts of their fellow christians, and how much they have robbed themselves of the most solid peace and self enjoyment. They ought to walk humbly and softly before God every day. They ought to keep their hearts with all diligence, and guard against the assaults of Satan and the snares of the world. They ought to grow in grace; and, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, to press toward the mark of sinless perfection.

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SERMON LX.

MEN HAVE NO RIGHT TO MISTAKE THE NATURE OF THEIR MORAL EXERCISES.

But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. — Luke, ix. 55.

All men are naturally disposed to think that their hearts are better than they are, and to mistake the nature of their moral exercises. To rectify this dangerous error, our Saviour took a great deal of pains, in his preaching and private discourses. In his sermon on the Mount, he exposed the self deception of the Scribes and Pharisees, who mistook their selfish feelings for true benevolence. Nor was he less plain and pointed upon this subject, in his more private discourses with his disciples. Whenever he perceived them to be blind to their own hearts and unacquainted with the real motives of their own conduct, he never failed to reprove them for their criminal ignorance. Many instances of this kind might be mentioned, but that to which our text refers is the most remarkable. "It came to pass when the time was come that Jesus should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem; and sent messengers before his face; and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Though the disciples sometimes loved Christ with a pure, disinterested affection, yet they sometimes

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exercised a false and selfish affection towards him. In this case, it was their false love which kindled into vengeance; and they resented the conduct of the Samaritans, because they thought it cast contempt upon them, as well as upon their divine Master. They mistook, however, their love to themselves for love to their Redeemer, and really thought that they felt and expressed a zeal for his honor, while they really felt and expressed a spirit of revenge for personal abuse. Notwithstanding they had been so long and intimately acquainted with Christ, yet they still entertained some wrong apprehensions of his true design in coming into the world. They flattered themselves, that he would restore the kingdom to Israel, and make them and their nation his peculiar favorites. They supposed, as the Samaritans supposed, that he was partial to the Jews, and therefore they loved him, for the same reason for which the Samaritans hated him. Yet they were so unacquainted with their own hearts, that they mistook their *selfish* love, for *holy* love to Christ, and their *selfish* hatred of the Samaritans, for *holy* hatred of sin. But Christ knew what was in their hearts better than they did themselves, and kindly reproved them for their criminal ignorance and self deception. Hence we may justly conclude, that Christ meant to teach us this important truth,

That men have no right, in any case, to mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections. I shall,

I. Show that men are apt to do this in some cases; and,

II. That they have no right to do it, in any case.

I. I am to show that men are apt, in some cases, to mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections.

Notwithstanding their strong propensity to mistake the nature of their moral exercises, they are often placed under such circumstances, and have such lively exercises of mind, that they cannot help knowing what manner of spirit they are of. Sinners sometimes have such clear views of divine objects, and such sensible opposition towards them, that they know their hearts are not right with God. And sometimes saints have such lively exercises of grace, that they can clearly and certainly distinguish them from all selfish and sinful affections. But yet there are many cases in which both saints and sinners are extremely apt to deceive themselves in respect to the nature of their moral exercises. And the question now before us is, When do they really mistake sin for holiness, and selfishness for true benevolence? And here it is plain,

1. That they often make this mistake, when their selfishness leads them to do the same things which benevolence would lead them to do. Selfishness in a sinner will often

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make him act just like a saint; and selfishness in a saint will often make him act just as he would do under the influence of pure benevolence. There is no external action which can proceed from a good heart, but what may proceed from a heart totally destitute of goodness. Will benevolence lead men to observe the Sabbath, to read the Bible, to call upon God, to relieve the distressed, to speak the truth, and to pay an external obedience to the divine will? Selfishness, under certain circumstances, will lead men to do all these things, and to appear possessed of true benevolence. The Pharisees, who acted entirely from mercenary motives, performed the same external acts of morality and religion which they would have performed had they been possessed of true love to God. This propriety and beauty of their external conduct led them to imagine that they were really pious, and to mistake their selfish, for benevolent feelings. The young ruler, who came to Christ to know his duty, verily thought he had perfectly done it, because he had externally obeyed every divine command. Paul, while a Pharisee, formed the same false opinion of the nature of his moral exercises, and supposed he had lived a perfectly holy and blameless life, because he had done that from selfishness which he ought and would have done, if he had been truly benevolent. Whenever selfishness leads men to put on the appearance of benevolence, they are extremely apt to think they are governed by a right spirit, and have those affections which are required by the law of love.

2. Men may mistake their selfish feelings for true benevolence, when they lead them to promote benevolent designs. Real benevolence is an active principle, which prompts men to do all the good in their power; and when their power fails, it leads them to form benevolent designs to promote the temporal and spiritual benefit of mankind. But selfishness, under certain circumstances, will carry men a great way in forming benevolent designs, and in exerting themselves to promote the public good. We often see sinners unite with saints in promoting designs of great utility and importance, with apparently equal zeal and activity. And when selfishness operates in this manner, and leads men to promote the same useful and benevolent purposes which true benevolence would lead them to promote, they are very apt to form a good opinion of themselves, and to mistake their selfish for benevolent feelings. Instead of judging of the nature of their actions by their motives, they judge of the nature of their motives by their actions; which is a very false and dangerous mode of judging. This seems to have been the error of Jehu, while warmly engaged in destroying idolatry and promoting the purity of divine wor-

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ship. He undoubtedly thought he was pursuing a benevolent design from benevolent motives; for he invited Jehonadab to come with him, and see his zeal for the Lord. But there is great reason to fear that he knew not what manner of spirit he was of, and mistook a zeal for his own glory for a zeal for the glory of God. There are innumerable cases in which selfishness will thus unite with benevolence; and in all such cases men are extremely apt to mistake the motives of their conduct, and to ascribe that to benevolence, which flows from selfishness.

3. When the same species of affections flow from selfishness which would flow from benevolence, then there is opportunity for men to mistake the nature of their moral exercises. It was for making such a mistake, that the disciples were reproved in the text. They had a selfish zeal for the honor of Christ, and a selfish indignation against those who refused to give him a cordial reception. In such a case, they ought to have had zeal and indignation; and had they thus possessed true benevolence, it would have kindled into a holy zeal and indignation. When Christ saw the Temple of God abused and profaned, he expressed a zeal for the honor of his Father, and an indignation against those who made his house a den of thieves. His zeal and indignation flowed from pure benevolence; but the zeal and indignation of his disciples flowed from a selfish heart. Their selfishness led them to exercise the same species of affections, which they would and ought to have exercised, had they been truly benevolent; and because their affections were of the right species, they thought they were of the right nature. When selfishness runs in a religious channel, and produces religious affections of the same species with those which arise from a benevolent heart, they look so much like holiness, that men are extremely disposed to take them for real holiness, though they are in their nature diametrically opposed to it. There may be a selfish as well as a benevolent love; a selfish as well as a benevolent zeal; a selfish as well as a benevolent joy; and all these selfish affections bear such a near resemblance to the same species of benevolent feelings, that both good and bad men very frequently imagine that they are truly holy and virtuous exercises. There were multitudes, who followed Christ for the sake of the loaves or from selfish motives, that were full of love, and joy, and admiration, and ready on every occasion to cry, "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." But though these persons verily thought that their affections for Christ were sincere and benevolent, yet when they saw others despise and reject him, and found that he opposed and condemned all selfish persons and selfish conduct, their mercenary love and joy turned into enmity, and prompted them

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to cry, "Crucify him, crucify him." Selfishness very often produces the same species of religious affections, that benevolence produces; and when this is the case, men are prone to deceive themselves, and verily to believe that they are under the influence of the divine Spirit, while they are actually indulging the most selfish feelings.

4. When selfish and holy affections follow each other in a thick succession, then men are apt to blend them together, and to view them all as of the same pure and benevolent nature. Thus, when good men rejoice in God, on account of some peculiar favors which he has bestowed upon them in particular, they at the same time, or as nearly at the same time as possible, rejoice in themselves; but yet they are ready to consider all their joyful and grateful affections as the fruit of true love to God. Their thoughts pass from God to themselves, and from themselves to God, in such a rapid succession, that they hardly perceive that their affections change their objects, and, of consequence, do really change their nature. This is a very common case. Good men rarely have holy affections, without having some sinful ones stealing in among them. In almost all their love to God and man, and in all their religious duties and devotions, their good affections are mixed with some selfish feelings, which, in that connection, appear to them as virtuous and pious. This seems to have been the case with the disciples, when Christ rebuked them for their self deception. Their love to him was mixed with their love to themselves, so that they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. Selfish affections may be so intimately connected with benevolent ones, that they cannot be distinguished without the most critical and impartial attention to the exercises and operations of the heart. And since all men are naturally disposed to view all their moral exercises in the most favorable light, they are very prone, in such cases as these, to put sin for holiness, and selfishness for true benevolence.

5. When holy and sinful affections are produced by the same means, men are apt to consider them all as of the same pure and benevolent nature. It seems to be a common opinion, that the effect must be of the same nature as the cause or means by which it is produced. Men are generally disposed to look upon all their affections as good, which are excited by means that are good. When they are sensibly and seriously affected by reading the Bible, by religious conversation, by the preaching of the gospel, by the common influences of the Spirit, by public calamities, or by personal afflictions and bereavements, they are very ready to consider their love, joy, sorrow, hope, fear, submission, or ardent desires, as right affections, merely

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because they arise from what are commonly called the means of grace, and are often productive of that effect. The Israelites at Mount Sinai were deeply affected by what they saw and heard on that solemn occasion, and hence they supposed that their religious awe, and fear, and reverence, were truly holy affections; and this emboldened them to promise, that all the Lord their God had said they would do, and be obedient; though they were really destitute of every holy exercise. Christ deeply impressed the minds of multitudes by his preaching and miracles, who mistook their selfish joy and admiration, excited by such means, for gracious affections. And men are no less disposed now, than they were in Christ's day, to believe that all their tender feelings, which are excited by solemn scenes, solemn objects, and solemn motives, are truly virtuous. They think, if they love, or fear, or submit, or rejoice, or hope, or resolve, while the means of grace are used with them, these exercises of the heart cannot be wrong, because they are produced by means which are good. And though Christ has told them that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor an evil heart bring forth gracious affections, yet they will believe that their selfish feelings, under religious means, are the essence of true religion. It is often said, and still oftener thought, that the preaching of the gospel, the providence of God, and the common influence of the Spirit, cannot be the means of producing selfish and sinful affections. It is true, indeed, such religious instruction and cultivation may produce gracious effects; but it is equally true, that they may produce the most selfish and criminal affections. Hence men have no just ground to conclude that their religious views and feelings are of the right kind, merely because they can tell what text, or what sermon, or what affliction, deeply impressed their minds, and turned their attention to God and divine objects. But there is reason to fear, that both saints and sinners do, in this and in many other cases, mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections.

And this leads me to show,

II. That men have no right to make this mistake in any case whatsoever. For,

1. There is a wide and essential difference between holy and unholy affections. Darkness is not more opposite to light, nor cold to heat, than selfishness is to true benevolence. The nature of the one is to promote private, and the nature of the other is to promote public good. All selfish affections are interested, and terminate in the good of the person who feels them; but benevolent affections are disinterested, and seek a more noble and disinterested object. This contrariety between holy and unholy

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affections lays a foundation for every person, in all cases, to know what manner of spirit he is of. God has given all men a moral sense, which enables them to distinguish the nature of all their moral exercises, and to know whether they are of a selfish or benevolent kind. If they will only consult conscience, and allow it to do its office, they may in all cases infallibly determine whether they are seeking a selfish or benevolent good. And they have no right to judge of the nature of any of their affections, without consulting conscience; nor to form an opinion in opposition to its infallible dictates. There is no affection of the heart but what may be brought before this tribunal, and have its nature and tendency clearly and justly ascertained. It must be owing to some blamable negligence, inattention or partiality, therefore, if either saints or sinners, in any case, mistake the nature of their moral exercises, and imagine that their affections are holy when they are really sinful. As they are always capable of forming a true judgment of their own hearts, so they have no right, under any circumstances, to think them better or worse than they are in reality.

2. God has given them all proper and necessary means to assist them in knowing their own hearts. He has laid down in his word a great variety of marks of true and false love, by which they may compare and judge of their moral exercises. He has plainly told them how selfishness and benevolence will operate and oppose each other. And he has set before them a great many striking examples of holy and unholy men, which illustrate the nature of holiness and unholiness, in the most plain and instructive manner. In the conduct of Abel and Cain, of Moses and Pharaoh, of Elijah and Ahab, of John and Judas, and of many more mentioned in scripture, the opposite natures of holiness and sin, or benevolence and selfishness, are visibly delineated. Indeed, it is next to impossible, that any should read the history which God has given of mankind, and not perceive the essential difference between right and wrong, holy and unholy affections. The Bible history is a glass, in which all men may clearly discover their own moral features, and easily determine what manner of persons they are. Under so many means of knowing himself, no man has a right to think himself something when he is nothing, or to mistake his selfishness for benevolence.

3. God has expressly forbidden men to mistake the nature of their religious affections, and to deceive themselves in respect to their spiritual state. He says repeatedly, "Be not deceived." And again he says, "Let no man deceive himself." Christ demanded of sinners, "Yea, and why even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right?" And when his disciples mistook the

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nature of their zeal, he condemned them for their self deception. "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." After God has given men the power and the means of distinguishing the essential difference between nature and grace, he may very justly forbid them to mistake their natural affections for gracious exercises. The divine prohibitions in regard to self deception are as just and binding as any other prohibitions against any other moral evil, and men have no more right to deceive themselves concerning their own hearts, than they have to practice any other deception or hypocrisy. Besides,

4. They cannot mistake the nature of their moral exercises, unless they are under the influence of some selfish and sinful motive, which they have no right to comply with. True benevolence will naturally lead persons to judge righteous judgment respecting the nature of all their religious exercises and external conduct. It is only while men are under the reigning power of selfishness, that they desire to think too favorably of their own hearts, and mistake sinful for holy exercises. Were they to judge of their views and feelings, only while in the exercise of grace, they would judge impartially, and clearly distinguish their wrong from right exercises. It must, therefore, always be wrong for men to mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections, because they can never make this dangerous mistake, unless they are under the blinding influence of that selfishness, which they have no right in any case to indulge.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If men may mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections, then they may likewise mistake their benevolent affections for selfish feelings. Though they are more liable to mistake nature for grace, than grace for nature, yet there are various ways in which they may run into this less common and less dangerous error. The best of christians are often too inattentive to the exercises of their own minds, by which they are liable to mistake their holy for unholy affections. They are so sensible of the corruption of their hearts, and so often discover wrong motives of conduct, that they are ready to suspect the nature of their good exercises, which are mixed with so many that they know to be evil. Or they may become so dull and stupid, and have so little grace, that they cannot discover it, without more than common attention, which they are indisposed to give. So that when they are awakened to realize their spiritual leanness and languishment, they are surprised, and ready to give up all their past hopes, and to sink down in deep despondency. This is the natural and painful consequence of their mistaking the

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few holy exercises they have, for selfish feelings. And whenever they suffer themselves to depart from God and grow cold and formal in the duties of devotion, they may justly expect that their sinful declension will be followed with darkness, doubts, and distressing fears.

There is another way in which gloomy christians may mistake the nature of their pious affections, and that is, by being too much afraid of deceiving themselves. In their dark and gloomy frames, they have an awful apprehension of the danger of self deception, which leads them to ponder on the dark side of things, and to search after all possible evidence against themselves, in order to know the very worst of their case. And while they are doing this, they either overlook or reject all evidence in their favor, because they feel bound in duty to give up their hope. Hence, like David, they refuse to be comforted, by calling in question not only the sincerity of their present feelings, but also the sincerity of all their past exercises of love, faith, repentance, submission, joy and peace, which they once thought were of the right kind, and which afforded them great satisfaction and enjoyment. Under such gloomy circumstances, many real, and some eminent christians, have mistaken grace for nature, and ascribed all their pious affections to selfish motives, which has given them a great deal of needless, and worse than needless, anxiety and distress.

Besides these two, there is a third way in which some good men may mistake the nature of their religious exercises, and conclude that they have never experienced a saving change. It is by comparing themselves with themselves, or with others whom they esteem better than themselves. Though they know, by experience, that they have actually exercised love, faith, repentance, godly sorrow, humility, submission, and self denial; yet they find that they have not been uniform, consistent, and persevering in these exercises, but have often had very different and contradictory views and feelings. And this want of uniformity and consistency in their religious exercises, they consider as a conclusive evidence of their insincerity and graceless state, though it is in reality only an evidence of that imperfection in holiness, which the scripture represents as common to all christians in this life. They may likewise run into the same error respecting their spiritual state, by comparing themselves with others, whom they view as eminently pious. When they hear such persons relate what light they have had in reading the scriptures, what peace and comfort and freedom they have enjoyed in secret devotions, and how little they have been troubled with darkness, doubts, or fears, they are ready to conclude that they themselves are strangers to true religion, because they have never expe-

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rienced the same high and lively exercises of grace. But no real christians have a right, in this or any other way, to mistake their real character and condition. They ought to be very thankful for the least spark of saving grace.

2. If men are apt to mistake the nature of their moral exercises, then good men are very liable to think they have more grace than they really possess. This was the case of the disciples, whom Christ rebuked for esteeming themselves better than they were in his impartial eye. They supposed they felt a pure and holy zeal for his honor, while they were indulging a false and selfish zeal for their own reputation. All good men are equally liable to the same species of self deception. Their natural affections often run in the same channel, and towards the same objects, with their gracious exercises; and when this happens, they are apt to think, that they have more love, more faith, more self denial, and more holy joy and gratitude, than they really feel or express. Their good exercises predominate, and give an amiable complexion to all the selfish feelings of their hearts. And though they might distinguish their wrong affections from their right ones; yet their self love leads them to think more highly of themselves, than they ought to think, which is the essence of spiritual pride. This is a secret sin, which most insensibly besets good men. How often did God reprove his ancient people for their high and unreasonable opinion of their goodness? How often did Christ rebuke the Scribes and Pharisees for their spiritual pride and self conceit? Yea, how often did he rebuke his own disciples for the same sin? He reproved Peter for his pride and self confidence. He reproved the sons of Zebedee for their ambitious views and claims. And he visited Paul with a thorn in the flesh, to make him think soberly and as he ought to think, of himself. Were men perfectly good, they would never be proud of their goodness; but while they remain imperfect, they are as liable to overrate their goodness, as any other personal quality or excellence. There is reason to fear, that not only pious, but eminently pious men, do often entertain too high an opinion of their piety, by mistaking many of their selfish feelings for pure and disinterested benevolence. And if they would only scrutinize their religious exercises with impartiality, and compare them with the law of love and the spirit of Christ, they would find abundant reason to humble themselves, like Hezekiah, for the pride of their hearts.

3. If men are prone to mistake their selfish feelings for benevolent affections, then we may easily see why they so generally disbelieve the doctrine of total depravity, which is plainly taught in the word of God. None pretend to deny that

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mankind are sinners, and very far from being so good as they ought to be. But few, however, are disposed to believe that any of the human race are totally depraved, and entirely destitute of every right exercise of heart. Most men imagine that the worst of sinners have some sparks of goodness, and, in their sober intervals, form some good resolutions, and perform some good actions. They form this favorable opinion of human nature, from their own experience. They are conscious that they were never so stupid, so hardened, or so wholly inclined to evil, as to have no desires, nor endeavors, to feel and act right; but, on the other hand, they have often pitied the afflicted, relieved the distressed, and done a great many things on purpose to promote the good of their fellow creatures. A consciousness of such feelings and conduct, naturally leads them to conclude that there is no such thing as total depravity in any human heart. But if selfishness may put on the appearance of benevolence, it is easy to discover the fallacy of this mode of reasoning. Those who argue in this manner, mistake selfish feelings for benevolent affections. And they will continue to make this mistake, until the divine law is set home upon their conscience. Paul had no apprehension of his total depravity, until the commandment came, and convinced him that there was no good thing in his heart. He thought he was blameless, while he was under the entire dominion of sin; and he thought so from his own experience. And it is very difficult to make any sinners think otherwise of themselves, until their conscience is awakened to distinguish nature from grace, or their selfish feelings from benevolent affections.

4. If men have no right to mistake the nature of any of their moral exercises, then real christians have no right to doubt of their good estate. They have gracious affections, which are diametrically opposite to selfish feelings; and those gracious affections would afford them a satisfying evidence of a saving change, if they would only distinguish them from their unholy exercises. Their holy affections are an infallible evidence of their being born of God and having passed from death unto life, notwithstanding any contrary feelings. Their remaining corruptions do, indeed, prove that they are imperfect in holiness, but do not prove that they are in a state of nature, and wholly destitute of grace. There is no man that liveth and sinneth not. The best of men in this world are more or less burdened with sin and guilt. The apostle Paul himself groaned under this burden. He said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But notwithstanding this, he could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." His unholy exercises were no counter evidence

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to his holy ones, and therefore were no just cause for doubting of his good estate. His consciousness of sincerely loving the divine law, was an infallible evidence of the renovation of his heart, and of his reconciliation to God and title to pardoning mercy. All true christians do as really love God and his holy law, as the apostle did, and they may be as conscious of their holy affections as he was, and of course may know, as he did, that they are in a state of grace and favor with God. It is upon this ground that real christians are required to make their calling and election sure. This they all are capable of doing, and if they neglect to do it, they are guilty of refusing to be comforted, and of withholding from God that gratitude and praise, which his distinguishing grace demands. As they have experienced the grace of God in truth, so they ought to renounce their unreasonable doubts and fears, and to rejoice in a well grounded hope of eternal life.

Finally, this subject calls upon all to inquire what manner of spirit they are of. The great propensity of mankind to mistake the nature of their moral exercises, and to judge too favorably of themselves, renders self examination not only proper, but highly necessary. If Christ's first disciples had occasion to examine what spirit they were of, there is reason to think that all other persons have much more occasion to look into their hearts, and inquire whether they have not been guilty of much self deception, which is both criminal and dangerous. And if they would discover the truth upon this serious and interesting subject, let them answer some such questions as the following.

Have you an inquisitive spirit respecting the nature of your religious affections, and the true state of your minds? There are many who are very inquisitive about other things, but have no inclination to acquire self knowledge. They think much and say much about others, who appear to be destitute of vital piety and even moral honesty, while they totally neglect to call themselves to an account, and examine their own internal views and feelings. But it is characteristic of good men to make diligent search, and commune with their own hearts. Have you this habitual desire to search and try yourselves by the infallible rules which God has given you for this purpose? Or do you live in the total or habitual neglect of this salutary and necessary duty? A true answer to this query will tend to determine whether you are in a state of nature or a state of grace, and whether you are growing, or declining christians.

Have you examined yourselves impartially? If you examine your hearts ever so frequently, without an impartial and sincere desire to know what they are, you may only increase

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your self deception, and become more and more ignorant of your true state and character. It is to be feared, that many first entertain, and afterward support, their hope of being the subjects of a saving change, by a partial and selfish opinion of their religious views and feelings. Their hope originated from a self righteous spirit, and the same spirit governs them in their self examination. They have never been willing to know the truth, and never will know it, unless they examine themselves with more impartiality. It concerns you, therefore, to inquire whether you have had a sincere desire to know your own hearts, and have examined them with a real willingness to discover the nature of your affections, and the true state of your souls.

Have you been so much acquainted with the natural deceitfulness of your hearts, as to find the need of critical and frequent self examination? Many have such a good opinion of their own hearts, as never to call their goodness in question, which is an unhappy sign that they have never known their native and total depravity. Real christians know, by painful experience, that their hearts are by nature deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. They have found the folly and danger of trusting in their good desires, intentions, and resolutions. They have known, to their sorrow, that their hearts are like a deceitful bow, always bent to backsliding. This has led them to realize the necessity of watching and examining their hearts with great diligence and impartiality. Has your experience, then, of the deceitfulness of your hearts led you to the frequent and faithful performance of this duty?

Have you used all the proper means in your power to discover your spiritual state, and the nature of your religious experiences? Perhaps you have been seriously affected by the word or providence of God. Perhaps you have seen your exposedness to eternal destruction, and felt great anxiety to escape the wrath to come. And perhaps you have been convinced of your just desert of that everlasting punishment which you feared. But, after all, have you become reconciled to the justice of God in your condemnation? Have you cordially embraced the offers of life, and taken God for your supreme portion? If you have not exercised such love and submission to God, and such dependence upon sovereign grace, your fears and convictions can afford you no just foundation to think that you have passed from death unto life, and become the heirs of salvation. Now, have you compared your views and feelings with the marks of grace in the word of God? Have you read the best books you could find upon experimental religion? Have you conversed freely with judicious christians of your

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acquaintance? And have you earnestly prayed that God would search your hearts, and not suffer you to deceive yourselves in the great concerns of your souls?

Finally, have you ever come to a decision respecting your spiritual state? Many choose to live in doubt, rather than to come to a fair and satisfactory conclusion, whether they are or are not the true friends of God. This is a dark mark. Real christians are willing to know the truth, whether it be in their favor or against them. They sincerely desire to know whether they are in the path that leads to heaven, or in that which leads to destruction. If they find evidence, that God has formed them vessels of mercy, they desire to give up themselves publicly to his service, and to walk worthy of their high and holy calling, and to lead others to glorify their heavenly Father. Have you then come to a decision, and found your path clear to do your whole duty?

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PART XVII.

HOLINESS.

SERMONS LXI.—LXVI.

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SERMON LXI.

LOVE THE ESSENCE OF OBEDIENCE.

THEREFORE love is the fulfilling of the law. — ROMANS, xiii. 10.

IT appears from the words to which this passage refers, that the apostle is here speaking, not of the ceremonial law, which ceased at the death of Christ, but of the moral law, which still remains in its full force and obligation. This law, which is founded in the nature of things, and which is level to every capacity, has been very generally misunderstood and perverted. The Scribes and Pharisees, and even Paul himself before his conversion, totally misapprehended its proper meaning. Nor is it much better understood now, than formerly. This, however, is very easy to be accounted for. Those who are unwilling to do their duty, are always unwilling to become acquainted with it. An undutiful child is disposed to misunderstand his father's commands; an unfaithful servant is apt to mistake his master's orders; a rebellious subject is prone to misconstrue the laws of the state; and the same spirit of disobedience inclines all classes of sinners to misunderstand the first and fundamental rule of duty. But a clear knowledge of the nature and extent of the law of love seems to be very necessary, in order to understand the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and to reconcile them with each other. It is a matter of real importance, therefore, to set the declaration of the text in a clear and consistent light. And in order to this, it is proposed,

I. To describe the nature of love in general.

II. To describe the nature of true love in particular. And,

III. To show that true love is the fulfilling of the law.

I. The nature of love in general is to be described.

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If we turn our attention inwardly and examine the operations of our own minds, we shall be convinced that love is something very different from either perception, reason, or conscience. These are natural faculties, which do their office independently of the will. It depends upon our perception, not upon our will, whether an object shall appear either black or white. It depends upon our reason, not upon our will, whether a proposition shall appear either true or false. It depends upon our conscience, not upon our will, whether an action shall appear either good or evil. But it depends entirely upon our *choice*, whether we shall love either a white or a black object, either a true or false proposition, either a good or an evil action. Hence we intuitively know that love is a free, voluntary affection, which is entirely distinct from every natural faculty of the mind. It is neither a power nor a principle of action, but rather an act or exercise itself. And in this respect, it totally differs from every bodily and mental taste; in which we are altogether passive. We cannot help tasting the sweetness of honey, nor relishing the beauties of nature and of art. But we are under no natural necessity of loving a beautiful flower, nor an amiable character. It is, therefore, the voice of universal experience, that love is a free, voluntary exercise, which essentially differs from any natural power, principle, taste, or sensation, of the human mind. Freedom and activity are essential to love in general. The next thing is,

II. To describe the nature of true love in particular.

Since we are free and voluntary in loving, there is a just ground of distinction between true love and false. And agreeably to this distinction, God requires one kind of love and forbids another. He requires us to love himself supremely, but forbids us thus to love ourselves, or any other created object. These two kinds of love are essentially different. The one is true love, and the other false; the one is pure benevolence, and the other is real selfishness; the one is the fulfilling, and the other the transgression, of the law. It appears, therefore, to be necessary to point out the peculiar properties of true love, by which it is distinguished from false.

1. True love is universal, extending to being in general, or to God and all his creatures. "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast." The primary object of true benevolence is *being*, simply considered, or a mere capacity of enjoying happiness and suffering pain. It necessarily embraces God, and all sensitive natures. Though the man of true benevolence has a *peculiar complacency* in God and in all other benevolent beings, yet he *wishes well* to creatures that have no benevolence, and even to such as are incapable of all moral exercises.

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It is, therefore, the nature of true benevolence to run parallel with universal being, whether uncreated or created; whether rational or irrational; whether holy or unholy. And in this respect, it essentially differs from that selfish and false affection which centres in one individual, and terminates in personal happiness.

2. True love is impartial. It regards every proper object of benevolence according to its apparent worth and importance in the scale of being. It regards God according to his greatness and goodness, and of course more than all created beings. And among created beings, it prefers the great to the small, and the good to the great. The truly benevolent man measures his affections towards every being, according to its capacity and disposition of doing and of receiving good; and not according to the relation which it bears to his own private interest. As he values the happiness of the whole universe more than the happiness of a particular part, so he values the happiness of each part in exact proportion to its intrinsic and comparative worth. Such impartiality distinguishes true love from that tender mercy of the wicked which is real malevolence and cruelty, to all who oppose their private, personal interest.

3. True love is not only universal and impartial, but disinterested. Mercenary love can never form a virtuous character. This Cicero demonstrates in his treatise concerning moral ends. This all dramatic writers acknowledge, by forming their amiable characters upon the principle of disinterested benevolence. And this God himself maintains, in his controversy with Satan about the sincerity of Job. If there be any such thing as virtue, therefore, it must consist in disinterested love. Accordingly, the scripture represents all holy and virtuous affections as disinterested. David says of the citizen of Zion, "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Paul says of himself, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Why is charity so superlatively excellent, and so absolutely essential to a virtuous character? The apostle tells us in the next verse but one. It is because "*charity seeketh not her own.*" Such disinterested love the gospel every where inculcates, and especially in the following precepts. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with

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good." "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." According to the plain and obvious meaning of these passages, true love is disinterested, and essentially different from every selfish and sinful affection. It only remains to show,

III. That true love is the fulfilling of the law. The spirit of this proposition is, that pure, genuine benevolence is the essence and comprehension of all the obedience which God requires in his word. To establish this great and fundamental doctrine of religion, I would observe,

1. That true benevolence conforms the heart to God. God is love. His whole moral character consists in the various exercises and expressions of pure benevolence. Those, therefore, who feel and express a truly benevolent spirit, are conformed to God, the standard of moral perfection. So our Saviour taught his disciples. "Ye have heard, that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is *perfect*." If the moral perfection of man consists in conformity to the moral perfection of God, and the moral perfection of God consists in love, then love must be the fulfilling of the law. Certainly God cannot require man to be more holy or perfect than himself.

2. It appears from express declarations of scripture, that love answers the full demand of the law. When a certain man asked our Saviour, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" he replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." This last clause fixes our Lord's meaning, and leaves no room to doubt that true love fulfils, not only the first and second, but every other precept of the law. The apostle James, speaking on the same subject, says, "The end of the commandment is *charity* out of a pure heart." By this he declares that charity or true love fully answers the spirit and design of the law. And he

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conveys the same sentiment by a different mode of expression. "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well." The apostle Paul, having exhorted believers to exercise a variety of holy affections, concludes by saying, "Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." By this he intimates that true love comprises and links together all the christian graces and virtues, which form a perfect moral character. And he says the same thing again in plainer terms. "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." These passages, taken in their most easy and natural sense, plainly teach us that love answers all the demands of the law.

3. It is the nature of true love to make us feel and act in every respect just as God requires. So far as we possess true benevolence, we shall both internally and externally obey every divine command. We shall not only feel properly towards God, our neighbor and ourselves, but also express our feelings by all proper external actions. Are we commanded to rejoice that the Lord reigneth? If we love God we shall sincerely rejoice in his supreme and universal dominion. Are we commanded to pray without ceasing? If we love God, we shall take pleasure in pouring out our hearts before him in prayer. Are we commanded to do every thing to the glory of God? If we love God, we shall do every thing heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Are we commanded to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? If we esteem him the chiefest among ten thousand, we shall naturally exercise that faith which worketh by love. Are we exhorted to do to others as we would that others should do to us? If we love others as ourselves, we shall as really seek their interest as our own. Are rulers required to promote the good of their subjects? If they love their subjects, they will exert all their power and abilities to promote their peace and prosperity. Is it the duty of subjects to obey their rulers? If they love their rulers they will obey them, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. Does it become the rich to be kind to the poor? If the love of God be shed abroad in their hearts, they cannot see proper objects of charity, and yet shut up their bowels of compassion from them. In a word, if there be any other commandment which has not been mentioned, love will prompt men to obey it.

This natural tendency of love to produce every virtuous feeling and action, is beautifully illustrated by the apostle's description of charity; which, he says, "suffereth long, and is kind,—beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Such patience, kindness, candor and self

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denial, love has often produced. Love led Abraham to offer up Isaac. Love led Moses to renounce all his worldly prospects, and to suffer affliction with the people of God. Love led the prophets, the apostles and primitive christians, to perform astonishing acts of obedience and suffering. And love led the man Christ Jesus to suffer and die on the cross for the salvation of sinners. Love, therefore, is the fulfilling of the law, as it prompts men to do every thing which God commands. Add to this,

4. Love restrains men from every thing which God forbids. The law has prohibitions as well as precepts. God forbids some things as well as requires others. And it is the nature of love to restrain men from doing what God forbids, as well as to prompt them to do what God enjoins. We read, "Charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity." So long as love reigns in the heart, it restrains men from envy, pride, vanity, resentment, and every unseemly thought, word and action which God has forbidden. And it is in more particular reference to this restraining influence of love, that the apostle says it is the fulfilling of the law. This appears from the words before the text: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." If a man love his neighbor, he will not injure his person, nor property, nor character. If a man love his enemy, he will not render evil for evil, but blessing for cursing. If a man love his country, he will do nothing to injure its prosperity and happiness. And if a man love God, he will neither profane his name, nor dishonor his Son, nor resist his Spirit, nor oppose his kingdom, nor complain of his providence, nor do any thing to rob him of his glory. Love worketh no ill to any created or uncreated being; and therefore it is, in this and all other respects, the fulfilling of the law.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If all obedience to the divine law consists in the *positive* exercise of true love, then all disobedience to the divine law must consist in the *positive* exercise of false love, or real selfishness. The mere want of love cannot be a transgression of

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the law of love. Though all the animal tribes are totally destitute of that love which the law requires, yet they do not disobey the will of their Maker. A mere want is a mere nothing, and a mere nothing has no natural nor moral qualities. It is as hard to conceive that disobedience should consist in mere privation, as to conceive that obedience should consist in mere privation. It is as hard to conceive that sin should originate from a mere want of holiness, as to conceive that holiness should originate from the mere want of sin. This leads us to suppose that both sin and holiness have a positive existence, and diametrically opposite natures. And since all the holiness which the law requires consists in positive benevolence, it naturally follows that all the sin which the law condemns, consists in positive selfishness. These two kinds of love do actually exist and oppose each other. Interested love opposes disinterested; partial love opposes impartial; the love of a detached individual opposes the love of being in general. Selfishness disposes any person to seek his own private, separate interest, in opposition to the glory of God and the good of the universe. The law which requires positive benevolence, must necessarily condemn such positive selfishness, and nothing else. Accordingly, we find that nothing but selfishness and its various modifications are condemned in the Bible. The apostle tells us that "sin is the *transgression* of the law," and not a *mere want of conformity* to it. Positive selfishness, and nothing else, is the transgression of the law of pure, disinterested benevolence.

2. If love is the fulfilling of the law, then a good heart consists in love. A good heart is certainly required. God says, "My son, give me thine heart." And he says to sinners in general, "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit." He also reprobates the best services of those who are destitute of a good heart. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Solomon represents the heart as forming the moral character of every person. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is, indeed, the general representation of scripture, that a good heart constitutes a good man. Now, if this be true, a good heart must consist in love; for love is the fulfilling of the law. Hence, when God requires a good heart, he requires love, and when he requires love, he requires a good heart. And though it is said in the text that love is the fulfilling of the law, yet it may be as truly said that a good heart is the fulfilling of the law.

It is the dictate of common sense, that a good heart consists in love. For only separate love from a good heart, and there

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will be no good heart left. If a good heart were distinct from love, then we could form a clear idea of it distinct from love. But whenever we think of a good heart, either in ourselves or in others, we think of kind, tender, benevolent feelings, or the exercises of pure, divine love. And it is out of our power to conceive of a good heart, which is not wholly composed of good affections, or the genuine feelings of true benevolence.

If we now attend to the fruits of a good heart, we shall find them to be the same as the fruits of love. A good heart will produce spiritual and divine knowledge. Speaking of his peculiar people, God says, "I will give them an heart to *know* me." The apostle ascribes the same effect to love. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and *knoweth* God." The scripture also represents a good heart as the source of all moral goodness. "A good man," says our Lord, "out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." But if love be the fulfilling of the law, then love is equally the source of all moral goodness. According to scripture, as well as the common sense of mankind, the love and the good heart which God requires, are one and the same thing, and produce the same effects. Does a good heart form the whole moral character? So does love. Does a good heart comprise all that the law requires? So does love. Does a good heart produce every holy affection and virtuous action? So does love. There is not a single quality in a good heart, which cannot be found in love. Nor can a good heart be described, without describing that very love which is the fulfilling of the law. Whoever, therefore, attempts to distinguish true love from a good heart, or a good heart from true love, undertakes a task which the scripture will never enable him to perform.

3. If true love be the good heart which God requires, then false love or selfishness is the bad heart, which God condemns. A bad heart is directly opposite to a good heart. And if a good heart consists in benevolence, a bad heart must consist in selfishness. This conclusion is supported by the description which the sacred writers give of a bad heart. They represent it as productive of moral blindness. The apostle says of sinners, "Their understanding is *darkened*, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the *blindness of their heart*." And again he says, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." These representations agree with the declaration of Christ. "If thine eye," that is, thine heart, "be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." Now, it is found by universal experience, that selfishness has this same tendency to blind the mind with respect to God and

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duty. We never pretend to confide in our own judgment, nor in that of others, when we believe that either they or we are under the influence of selfish feelings. In this respect, selfishness and a bad heart are exactly alike.

And so they are in another respect. A bad heart is the source of all evil affections and actions. This our Saviour expressly asserts. "An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil." "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Such are the natural fruits of an evil heart; and such, the apostle tells us, are the fruits of self love. "In the last days," says he, "perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves." This is selfishness, which, he proceeds to say, shall make men "covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." According to these descriptions of self love and a bad heart, it appears that they are one and the same thing. Selfishness is all the evil heart that we ever find described in scripture, that we ever see acted out, or that we ever feel in our own breasts. We must conclude, therefore, that a bad heart wholly consists in selfishness, which is inimical to God and man, and which is productive of all moral evil.

4. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that many entertain very wrong ideas upon the subject we have been considering.

Some suppose that a good heart essentially consists in a good principle, taste, or relish, which is totally independent of the will. They imagine that Adam was created with such a good principle, taste, or relish; which was the source of all his holy exercises and actions, before the fall. And upon this ground they suppose that regeneration consists in implanting a new principle, taste, or relish in the mind, which is the source of all the holy exercises of the subject of grace. But this sentiment is totally repugnant to the law of love. This law requires no such principle of holiness; but holiness itself. This law requires nothing which is previous to love; but love itself. This law requires no dormant, inactive, torpid disposition, inclination, or taste; but the free, voluntary exercise of true benevolence.

Some suppose that a bad heart consists in a bad principle, disposition, or inclination; which is entirely distinct from sinful, voluntary exercises. They represent a corrupt nature or depraved heart, as the source of all sinful affections and passions. And they maintain that this corrupt nature is conveyed

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from Adam to all his posterity, who, they suppose, are morally depraved, before they have one sinful exercise, volition, or affection. But it appears from what has been said in this discourse, that all sinfulness consists in the various exercises and modifications of self love. The divine law condemns these exercises and nothing else. And our consciences concur with the sentence of the law, and condemn us for sinful exercises only. Hence we intuitively know that we never did derive a morally corrupt nature, or a morally corrupt principle, or a morally corrupt heart, from Adam. All our sin is personal, and consists in our own free and voluntary exercises.

Some suppose that sinners are under no obligation to exercise that love which the law requires, until they have a new principle, disposition, or inclination implanted in their minds, by the regenerating influences of the divine Spirit. But if there can be no such thing as a holy principle, disposition, or inclination, which is distinct from true love, or the exercise of real benevolence; then they may be required to have that love, which the law demands, before they are regenerated as well as afterwards. Their obligation to love God does not depend upon any holy principle which is distinct from love, but upon their *natural capacity* to love all the proper objects of benevolence. They are as able to love God, before they are regenerated as afterwards; and therefore are as much obliged to love God, before they are born again, as after they have been made the subjects of special grace.

Some suppose that sinners are *passive* in having a new heart, or in becoming real saints. But if a new heart does not consist in a principle of holiness, but in the exercise of holiness, or true benevolence, then the sinner may be as active in beginning to be holy, as in continuing to be holy; in turning from sin to holiness, as in perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Some suppose that after men are regenerated, they have two hearts, an old heart and a new one, which coëxist in their minds, and constantly produce diametrically opposite affections. The new heart, they suppose, is a new principle, which constantly produces holy affections; and the old heart is an old principle, which constantly produces unholy affections. And upon this ground, they suppose there is a continual warfare in the minds of good men, between their old and new hearts.* But if the new heart consists in that love which the law requires, and the old heart consists in that love which the law

* It is not denied that there is a spiritual warfare in the minds of true christians; but only that this warfare does not arise from two distinct, opposite hearts.

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condemns, then saints properly never have two hearts; but only one, which is sometimes holy and sometimes sinful. This is agreeable to their daily experience. They find their heart to be like a deceitful bow. It may be one hour in a holy and heavenly frame, and the next hour in a frame entirely different. But they are never conscious of loving and of hating God, at one and the same time.

Some suppose that good men are better than their free and voluntary exercises are. They imagine that saints may have grace in principle, while they have none in exercise. But since love is the fulfilling of the law, there is no foundation for this sentiment. Saints have just as much grace as true love, and no more. They are just as good as their holy exercises are, and no better. Whenever they exercise any selfish affection, they as really transgress the divine law, and fall under the divine displeasure, as if they never had possessed one gracious affection, or benevolent feeling. Such sentiments as these, which are founded on a dormant principle of grace, distinct from every gracious exercise, must appear entirely groundless, if love is the fulfilling of the law and comprises the whole duty of man.

5. Since love answers all the demands of the law, sinners have no excuse for not obeying any one of its precepts. God has furnished them with all the natural faculties which are necessary in order to understand and perform their whole duty. And all that he requires of them is, to exercise true love or real benevolence to the extent of those natural powers which they already possess. It is true, he requires them to make themselves a new heart; but the new heart which he requires them to make, consists in love. It is true, he requires them to be perfect; but the perfection which he requires them to have, consists in love. It is true, he requires them to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; but this cleansing all consists in love. It is true, he requires them to repent, to believe, to submit, and to deny themselves; but all the repentance, faith, submission, and self denial, which he requires, consist in love. In a word, there is not a single duty enjoined upon sinners, but what true love will perform. Hence, if they have no excuse for the want of that love which the law requires, they can have no excuse for not yielding universal obedience to the divine commands.

6. If the law requires nothing but love, then it always approves itself to every awakened and enlightened conscience. While sinners indulge themselves in carnal ease and security, they are ready to think and say that God is a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he had

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not strewed. But when their conscience is awakened to see that God requires no heart, no inward exercise, no external action, but what consists in or flows from love, they feel the propriety and justice of every divine precept. Paul never felt the force of the divine law, until it was set home upon his conscience. Then he found, it required nothing but benevolence, and condemned nothing but selfishness. This took away every excuse, and filled his conscience with guilt and remorse. He freely confesses, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. — But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." He felt himself justly condemned, for having always lived in the exercise of a selfish instead of a benevolent spirit. And all awakened and convinced sinners have the same view of themselves. Their consciences compel them, in spite of their hearts, to acknowledge that the law which condemns them for all their past selfishness, and which requires them immediately to love God supremely, upon pain of eternal destruction, is perfectly holy, just and good.

7. If love is the fulfilling of the law, then nothing without love can fulfil it. This, multitudes deny both in theory and in practice. The Scribes and Pharisees totally excluded love from the essence of obedience. The Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, placed all his obedience and hopes of divine acceptance in the mere externals of religion. The young man who came to our Saviour to ask the way to eternal life, verily thought that he had perfectly obeyed the law from his youth up, merely because he had never been guilty of any overt act of transgression. And Paul also, while in a state of nature and a perfect enemy to God, viewed himself, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." The same sentiment respecting the nature of true obedience still continues and prevails. Many imagine that though they have not the love of God in them, yet that by reading and praying, by attending public worship and divine ordinances, and by outward acts of justice, kindness and compassion, they can acceptably perform some part, if not the whole of their duty. But if love be the fulfilling of the law, then nothing done without love is, in the least, obedience to the divine commands. This doctrine Christ abundantly taught in his sermon on the mount, and in the whole course of his preaching. Hear his severe and pointed reproofs to the Jewish teachers, who separated obedience from love. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides,

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which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." The law of love requires nothing separate from love; and therefore no religious professions, no religious desires, no religious performances, which are separate from love, do in the least degree fulfil the law. Hence it is the first and immediate duty of sinners to exercise that love which the law requires. They cannot perform a single duty without the exercise of love. They can neither repent, nor believe, nor do any thing acceptable to God, until they renounce their enmity to him, and love him supremely. They must be reconciled to the law before they can be reconciled to the gospel. They must love the law before they can love the gospel, and embrace the offers of life; for saving faith worketh by love. Let every sinner, therefore, immediately obey the first and great commandment, and exercise that love, which alone will secure the favor and enjoyment of God. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

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SERMON LXII.

DISINTERESTED BENEVOLENCE.

WHICH now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves. — LUKE, x. 36.

COMMON sense is not that sense which mankind commonly exercise, but that sense which they all possess, and would always exercise were it not for the depravity of their hearts. They are all capable of knowing the difference between right and wrong, in their own conduct and in the conduct of others; nor would they ever differ in judgment on any moral subject, could they only be made to view it in a true and clear light. For this reason, our Saviour frequently appealed to the common sense of his hearers in his private and public discourses. And to do this in the best manner, he generally spake parables, or put cases in which they could not perceive themselves interested. By such a mode of instruction, he gained direct access to their consciences; and, in spite of their hearts, made them judge righteous judgment. We find a remarkable instance of this, in the parable to which our text refers. A certain lawyer came to Christ under the pretext of seeking instruction, but really with a view of trying him as a casuist. He said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Our Saviour first referred him to the divine law, which required him to love God supremely, and his neighbor as himself; "but he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" Instead of directly answering this captious question, Christ spake the following parable, which was a direct appeal to his own conscience, and could not fail to make him see and feel the truth: "And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went

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down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain Priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host; and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?* And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise." This parable might be viewed in various lights, and afford instruction on various subjects; but the words of our text naturally lead us to consider the two following things:

I. How differently these three men treated a poor object of distress;

II. To what it was owing, that they treated him so differently.

I. Let us consider how differently these three men treated the poor creature, that was robbed and wounded. This man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho; but the three men who found him in his wretched situation, were travelling in a contrary direction, and probably going to Jerusalem, where men ought to worship. And it seems they were travelling separately, and each came alone to the object of distress; so that each had a fair opportunity of acting according to his own feelings, without the least foreign influence. The wounded man was half dead, and incapable of crying for relief. The Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan, had nothing to consult but their own feelings, and each acted exactly as he felt. The Priest came first, and just saw the poor, miserable, perishing object, but never so much as went to him, lest his eye should affect his heart, and awaken his conscience to do his duty. The Levite, who came next, was more inhuman and cruel. When he came to the place, he went and looked on the wretched object, and saw his wounds, and heard his groans, but after all, passed by on the other side, and left him to perish without affording him the least assistance. In contrast with the Priest and Levite, how differently does the Samaritan appear? When he came and saw the same miserable object, he had compassion

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on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in wine and oil; and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him, and staid till the next day with him, and hired the master of the house to supply his wants, and promised to repay him for all future necessary expenses, at his return. So differently did these three men conduct, under the same circumstances, towards the same object of charity. This naturally leads us to inquire,

II. To what it was owing, that these three men treated their unfortunate fellow man so differently. They were all at liberty, and under no external compulsion, or restraint. They might have all, if they pleased, passed by the poor creature, and left him to die of his wounds; or the Priest and Levite might have acted the part of the Samaritan. Each of them had a fair opportunity of doing a noble and benevolent deed. Here then let us inquire,

1. Why the Priest and Levite conducted as they did, in neglecting to relieve the object of distress, which they both saw. It is evident, that it could not be owing to ignorance; for they both knew the man to be in a miserable and forlorn condition. Though the Priest did not go to him, and examine his case narrowly, yet he was convinced that he stood in need of compassion and relief; and that was the very reason of his keeping himself at a distance from him. The Levite was still better acquainted with his case; for he went and looked on his wounds and saw his danger and distress. They both knew that he must inevitably perish, unless somebody should speedily pity and relieve him. Their negligence, therefore, could not arise from ignorance. Nor was it owing to any national prejudice. The Jews at that day had no dealings with the Samaritans, whom they viewed as heathens and idolaters. Had the wounded man been a Samaritan, it might be supposed that they neglected him, because he belonged to a nation with whom they meant to hold no friendly intercourse. But he was a Jew, a kinsman according to the flesh, who had a peculiar claim to their sympathy and attention. This they both could discover, with a glance of the eye; and consequently they did not forsake him in his distress on account of any personal or national prejudice. Nor was their negligence to be ascribed to a mere want of love to that miserable object. It was undoubtedly the case, that they had no love or compassion towards him. They neither loved, nor hated him; but their mere want of love or hatred could not be the faulty cause, nor indeed any cause at all for their passing by him. The mere want of love, or pity, or compassion, or any other affection, can never be criminal. Nothing has no qualities, and the mere want of any thing is

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nothing; and therefore the mere want of pity, or compassion, towards an object of distress, cannot be in the least degree sinful. Had the Priest and Levite neglected their suffering countryman from no other cause than a mere want of benevolence towards him, their conduct would appear very different from what our Saviour intended to represent. Their treatment of him must have arisen from some positively sinful cause. And what could this be but selfishness? They were in the positive exercise of selfishness, when they saw, and neglected to relieve, a wounded, helpless man. They preferred their own ease and interest, to his life and happiness. They supposed it would be some hinderance and disadvantage to their objects of pursuit, to stop on their journey, and bind up his wounds, and supply his wants; and therefore they deliberately and voluntarily chose to let him die, rather than spend a little time, a little pains, and a little property, to save his life. Such selfish voluntary exercises excluded all tender, benevolent, compassionate feelings from their hearts. And it is apparent that total selfishness would operate in this manner, and harden their hearts, as adamant, towards that poor, miserable object. Total selfishness always excludes all benevolence, and makes a person altogether indifferent to the happiness and misery of all beings in the universe but himself. Total selfishness, therefore, and nothing else, can account for the conduct of the Priest and Levite, towards the man whom they left to welter and die in his blood. Their entire selfishness made them as regardless of his life and death, as the thieves were, who wounded him and left him half dead. They robbed and wounded him from no other motive than their own supposed private, personal, selfish good; and the Priest and Levite acted from precisely the same selfish motives. Nor would they have acted any otherwise, had there been ten, or ten thousand men in the same suffering condition. They only acted out that total selfishness which is natural to all mankind, and which is opposed to God and to all good. Let us now inquire,

2. Why the Samaritan treated the same object of distress so differently from the Priest and Levite. Had he been governed by the same selfish spirit that they possessed, we can see no reason why he should not have followed their steps, and left the poor man to die, without regarding his case, or affording him any relief. This constrains us to conclude that he possessed a spirit of pure, diffusive benevolence, which spontaneously moved him to acts of pity and compassion. For,

1. A benevolent spirit would dispose him to stop, when he saw the miserable object in the path. The Priest, it appears by the account, would not so much as stop, to examine the affect-

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ing case of a wounded, bleeding man, but pursued his own course and his own interest, without the least sympathy or compassion. Though he knew that the divine law, which it was his proper office to teach and practice, required him to relieve a neighbor's dumb beast in distress, yet he would not put himself out, nor give himself the least trouble, to relieve a human being, whose sufferings imperiously called for his commiseration and assistance. But though the Samaritan was on a long journey, and engaged in some important business, yet he was willing to postpone his journey and his business till another day, for the sake of healing the wounds and preserving the life of a stranger. He loved others as himself, and sought not his own things, but the things of others; which was an expression of pure benevolence and true self denial. He placed his own happiness in the happiness of others, which is the essence of holy, in distinction from selfish love.

2. A benevolent spirit would naturally dispose him to exercise pity and tenderness towards such a proper object of pity and compassion. The Levite stopped, and went to the man lying in his anguish; and yet, with a heart more obdurate and unfeeling than that of the Priest, left him to perish without help and without hope. But the Samaritan felt very differently on the occasion, for he had compassion on him in his forlorn condition. True benevolence always disposes those who possess it, to enter into the feelings of their fellow men under all circumstances, to rejoice with them that rejoice, to mourn with them that mourn, to weep with them that weep, and to suffer with them that suffer. Our Saviour shed tear for tear, and heaved sigh for sigh, with the mourners at the grave of Lazarus. God himself is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. He hears the young ravens when they cry, and pities the pains and distresses of every living creature. And all who are merciful as their Father in heaven is merciful, feel compassion towards every wretched and helpless object which their eyes behold. They always have a heart to pity, though they may not have skill, nor power, nor property to relieve. Such tender, compassionate feelings had the Samaritan even towards a Jew, one of his national enemies. He entered into his painful feelings, and heartily commiserated his unhappy fate. He loved this neighbor as himself, and felt as he would wish that another should feel towards him in the same wretched situation. This was an effect which could flow from no other source, than pure, disinterested, universal benevolence, but would spontaneously flow from such a virtuous principle.

3. A benevolent heart would naturally dispose him to afford

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relief to the object of his compassion. It is the nature of goodness to do good, and of compassion to relieve the distressed. God is good; and therefore he does good, not only to the good, but also to the evil and unthankful. Goodness, in Christ, prompted him to go about doing good, healing the sick, easing the pained, relieving the distressed and raising the dead. Goodness in Job made him guide the blind, support the lame, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and cause the widow's heart to sing for joy. The same benevolent spirit moved the good Samaritan to all his acts of kindness to the distressed Jew. It moved him to bind up his wounds, and pour oil and wine into them, though he was no surgeon, and never practiced the healing art. It moved him to take him up and set him on his own beast. It moved him to convey him to the best place of entertainment, and commit him to the care of one to whom it properly belonged to provide for the wants of strangers and travellers. And it moved him to another and greater act of self denial; that is, to part with his money, which commonly lies so near the hearts of men. In a word, his benevolent heart prompted him to do every thing that was necessary to be done, to relieve the pains, to remove the despair, to supply the wants, to promote the happiness, and to preserve the life, of a poor, suffering fellow mortal. When he left this feeble, wounded man at the inn, he did not know how long he would need the care and attention of the family where he was; and therefore he engaged to remunerate them for all their future necessary labor, trouble and expense; which displayed his integrity as well as benevolence.

4. A benevolent heart would naturally dispose him to treat the poor man in all respects as he did, without any prospect of reward. And it clearly appears from the statement of the case, that he acted upon purely disinterested motives, without the least prospect of any compensation. The man was a stranger, whom he had never seen before, and never expected to see again; for he supposed he might be gone before he returned from his journey. So that he had no ground to expect that the man whom he relieved would ever so much as thank him for his kindness, or publish his benevolence. For aught that appears, the inn-keeper did not know the poor man's benefactor, so that it could not be expected that he would spread the fame of his humanity. Neither the Priest, nor the Levite saw him pity and relieve the wounded man, so that it cannot be supposed that he acted with a view to cast reproach upon them for their selfish, mean, inhuman conduct. It clearly appears from the case stated, that the good Samaritan freely sacrificed his time, his trouble and his property, to the life and happiness of the poor Jew. This

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was acting without regard to his own interest, and directly in opposition to it. In this instance, he loved his neighbor better than himself, and valued his neighbor's interest more than his own. His benevolence was not only disinterested, but unlimited by any thing except his neighbor's wants; for he promised to do more than he had done, if his neighbor's good required it. Now, if we lay all these things together, can we account for the Samaritan's conduct upon any other ground than pure, holy benevolence? I know the best actions may be ascribed to selfish, unworthy motives, but it is impossible to discover any such motives in the conduct of the Samaritan.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If mere selfishness will account for the base and criminal conduct of the Priest and Levite towards the poor man that fell among thieves, then it will account for all the sin that ever was committed. All sin is of the same nature, and essentially consists in selfishness. Sin is a transgression of the law of love; and nothing but selfishness is a transgression of that law. God commands all men to love him supremely, and one another as themselves. When any man loves himself more than God, and his own good more than the good of any of his fellow creatures, he is totally selfish; and his selfishness is a transgression of the divine law. All sinfulness may be traced to selfishness as its source. Men never act from any worse than selfish motives. The Priest and Levite were only selfish, in disregarding the life and happiness of one of their miserable fellow men. They had no direct hatred or enmity towards him, and only loved and sought their own private, personal, selfish interest supremely and solely. The thieves, who robbed him and wounded him and left him half dead, acted from no worse motives than the Priest and Levite. They only sought their own private, personal interest, at the expense of the life, the happiness and the interest of the poor man. Pharaoh only sought his own private, selfish interest, while he enslaved the Israelites, and when he refused to release them, at God's command, from their cruel bondage. Adam only sought his own glory in opposition to the glory of God, when he partook of the forbidden fruit. Lucifer only sought his own supremacy in opposition to the supremacy of God, when he raised a rebellion in heaven. If we search all sacred and profane history, we shall not find a single sinner in the universe, who ever acted from a more criminal motive, than his own private, personal, selfish interest. Judas acted from no worse motive than selfishness, in betraying Christ. Haman acted from no worse

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motive than selfishness, in seeking to destroy Mordecai and his people. The Turks act from no worse motive than selfishness, in destroying the Greeks. And the Americans act from no worse motive than selfishness, in enslaving the Africans. Selfishness is the source of all the sins of omission and commission which are found in the world. If a man loves nobody but himself, he will care for nobody's interest but his own. This was the case of the Priest and Levite. And if a man loves nobody but himself, he will seek his own interest, though it destroys every body's interest but his own. This was the case of the thieves and robbers. There is nothing in the world so malignant and destructive in its nature and tendency, as selfishness. It has done all the mischief that ever has been done, and will do all the mischief that ever will be done. It has destroyed the temporal and eternal interests of millions in time past, and there is ground to fear, that it will continue to destroy the temporal and eternal interests of millions and millions more in time to come. No man ever can have a just and clear conception of the malignant nature and tendency of any sin, before he has a just and clear conception of the malignant nature and tendency of selfishness. Paul confesses that he never knew the evil nature and tendency of sin, before the commandment came home to his conscience: "Thou shalt not *covet;*" that is, thou shalt not be *selfish*. When this commandment came in its full force and obligation, his sin and guilt revived, and he died. He felt that he deserved, and stood exposed to, that eternal death which is the proper wages of sin.

2. It appears from the different conduct of those who robbed, and of those who neglected to relieve the poor man in the parable, that the different conduct of sinners is no evidence that they are not all totally depraved. There is scarcely any doctrine of the gospel so commonly denied, as the total depravity of sinners in general. Not only infidels and sectarians, but many who appear to be sound believers of the gospel, deny this doctrine. Though they allow that mankind are universally depraved, yet they cannot allow that their depravity is total, and exclusive of all true love to God and man. They ground their opinion principally upon the different conduct of those who have never experienced a saving change of heart. They see sinners exhibit so many amiable qualities, and do so many apparently useful and virtuous actions, that they cannot believe they are all totally destitute of all moral virtue, and entirely selfish and criminal in all their desires, intentions and actions. They could more readily believe that they are all dead in trespasses and sins, if they all acted like the most licentious and abandoned. But if all sin consists in selfishness, and all sin-

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ners always act from selfish motives, it is easy to see that they may act very differently, while pursuing a vast variety of totally selfish purposes. Some sinners may think it is for their interest to avoid all sins of commission, and practice only those of omission. This appears to have been the case of the Priest and Levite. They meant to maintain a fair, reputable character; and consequently, would neither murder, rob, nor steal, nor be guilty of any other sin of commission. But for the sake of pursuing their own selfish purposes, they would omit or neglect the duty of promoting the happiness, and preserving the life of a poor, miserable, dying man. Selfishness much oftener leads sinners into the sins of omission, than into the sins of commission. There are a thousand sinners, who every day commit the sins of omission, that totally avoid all sins of commission. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that prodigy of wickedness, appears to have maintained a fair, amiable character in the morning of life, and while under the penetrating eye of Solomon; but as soon as he thought it to be his interest to throw off his amiable, virtuous appearance, he did not hesitate to commit the grossest enormities. The selfishness of Satan himself sometimes makes him think it to be for his interest, and necessary in order to accomplish his most malignant purposes, to transform himself into an angel of light. Total selfishness will account as well for the best, as the worst actions of sinners. The same selfishness that led the Priest and Levite to neglect their duty, led others to steal and rob and murder. If men only understood the nature and tendency of selfishness, which is the essence of all sin, they never would deny the total depravity of sinners, on account of any difference they discover in their external conduct.

3. It appears from the different conduct of the Priest, Levite and Samaritan, that there is an essential difference between saints and sinners, or between selfishness and pure disinterested benevolence. Many imagine and maintain that there is no such thing as disinterested benevolence; and that all men always act from selfishness, and cannot act from any higher or better principle. They say every man ought to love himself and his own interest supremely, and that he ought not to love another man, nor another man's interest more than his own. And therefore they suppose that saints and sinners only pursue their own interest in different ways, while both pursue the same object, from the same selfish motives. On this supposition, there would be indeed only an apparent and circumstantial difference between them. But there is no ground to make this supposition; for it is as easy to conceive that a man may act from a disinterested love, as from a selfish love. And when

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one man acts from disinterested love, and another from selfish love, there is an essential, and not merely an apparent and circumstantial, difference in their characters and conduct. There was an essential difference in the characters and conduct of the Priest and Levite, and the good Samaritan. Their circumstances were precisely alike. The Priest came to the wounded man alone, and left him to die. The Levite came to the wounded man alone, and left him to die. And the good Samaritan came to the wounded man alone, but stopped and examined his case, pitied his condition, and nobly exerted himself to afford him relief. How came he to conduct so differently from the Priest and Levite? It could not be owing to different circumstances; for they were all three in exactly the same circumstances. What reason, or right, has any one to think or say that the Samaritan acted from the same selfish motives that the Priest and Levite did? They acted out selfishness; but he acted out pure, disinterested benevolence. They pursued their own interest; but he pursued the interest of another man. They placed their happiness in their own interest; but he placed his happiness in the interest of another man. And was it possible that he should place his happiness in the interest of another man, from a purely selfish motive? It is extremely absurd to say that good men are selfish because they take as much pleasure in doing good to others, as sinners do in doing mischief to others. If it be true that saints do place their happiness in the happiness of others, then it is absolutely certain that they actually exercise disinterested love; which is the essence of virtue or true holiness, in distinction from selfish love, which is the essence of all sin, or moral evil. There is no truth more certain from reason and scripture than this, that there is an essential difference between virtue and vice, sin and holiness, saints and sinners.

4. It appears from what has been said, that all men are capable of seeing the essential difference between saints and sinners. Our Saviour spake the parable of the good Samaritan for the very purpose of illustrating the essential distinction between sinners and saints, sin and holiness. A certain man, to justify himself for neglecting to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, put this question to Christ, "Who is my neighbor? Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho," &c. And as soon as he had finished his parable, he questioned the questioner, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go and do thou likewise." He was fully convinced that the Samaritan did right,

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but that the Priest and Levite did wrong; or, in other words, he was fully convinced that there was an essential difference between the character and conduct of the Samaritan, and the character and conduct of the Priest and Levite. And it is hard to conceive that any man should read the parable without receiving the same conviction and making the same acknowledgment. But many have denied the essential distinction between saints and sinners. Satan denied this distinction in respect to Job. He asked the Lord, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?—But put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." This was a plain insinuation that Job did not differ essentially from sinners, notwithstanding all God had said in his favor. Satan also indirectly called in question the disinterested and supreme love of Christ to his Father, when he addressed a selfish motive to his mind to induce him to fall down and worship him. However, be that as it may, we know that not a few who call themselves christians, deny that there is any essential distinction between saints and sinners. Some deny this distinction one way, and some another. Some deny it, by maintaining that we ought not to love God until we know that he loves us. Some deny it, by maintaining that we ought not to love God more than ourselves. And some, by maintaining that God requires self love of us, and that when we exercise self love we actually obey his commands. But if saints do not love God for what he is himself, if they do not love him more than themselves, and if they do obey him by exercising self love, they do nothing more than others. Sinners love those who love them; they love God for his favors, and they externally obey him from selfish motives. But it is vain to deny and dispute the essential distinction between saints and sinners, which is kept up through the Bible, and which cannot be denied without denying that there are such persons as either saints or sinners, or any such thing as either sin or holiness. If sin does not consist in selfishness, it cannot consist in any thing else; for there is nothing else that is morally evil or criminal. And if holiness does not consist in disinterested love, it cannot consist in any thing else; for there is nothing else that is morally excellent or virtuous. If there be any saints, they possess disinterested love; and if there be any sinners, they are totally destitute of disinterested love. And if saints possess that disinterested love of which sinners are entirely destitute, then there is an essential, and not merely an apparent and circumstantial, distinction between them. And this essential distinction Christ meant to illustrate, and did

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illustrate, in a manner level to the lowest capacity. There is no man who does not condemn selfishness when he sees it in himself or others; and there is no man but approves of disinterested love, when he finds it in himself or sees it in others.

5. We learn from what has been said, why the scripture represents good men as the excellent of the earth. It is because they possess that pure, holy and universal love in which all true holiness and moral excellence consists. They are as much more excellent than sinners, as benevolence is more excellent than selfishness. They are holy as God is holy, just as God is just, and merciful as God is merciful. They love God for the same reasons that he loves himself. They love his friends with the same complacency with which he loves them. And they love his enemies with the same benevolence with which he loves them. They feel towards all creatures, objects and events, so far as their knowledge extends, as he feels. They love all the designs of God, so far as they are acquainted with them, and desire to be instrumental in carrying them into execution. They have no interests but what they are willing should be made subservient to the higher interests of others, in which they take a sincere and peculiar pleasure. They are as much superior, in moral excellence, to those who seek their own interests supremely and solely, as they are different from them in their views, desires and happiness. Was not Abel more excellent than Cain? Were not Seth, Enoch, and the patriarchs more excellent than those who filled the earth with violence? Was not Moses more excellent than Pharaoh? Was not David more excellent than Saul? Was not Solomon more excellent than Jeroboam? Was not the Samaritan more excellent than the Priest and Levite? In a word, if there be any benevolent men, are they not more excellent than those who are entirely selfish? If this be true, then saints are certainly more excellent than sinners, and the representation which the scripture gives of good men, in respect to moral excellence, is perfectly agreeable to the common sense of all mankind.

6. We learn from what has been said, that those who are destitute of true benevolence to men, are equally destitute of true love to God. True love to God is precisely of the same nature as true love to men. All true love to men is disinterested, and all true love to God is disinterested. True disinterested benevolence is always the first exercise of a new heart. It is difficult to conceive how a man can have complacency in benevolence before he has exercised benevolence, and knows by experience how it feels. God first sheds abroad the love of benevolence in the heart of a sinner, and then the love of complacency. How often do those who relate their experiences,

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tell us that the first change they perceived in their minds, was the love of benevolence to every person they saw, and the love of complacency to all good men in particular; and then, love to the goodness or benevolence of God, which shone in every person, creature and object around them. But though every convert may not accurately distinguish the difference that actually existed in his first holy exercises, yet it is very certain that his love of benevolence was prior to his love of complacency towards God. But whether the first exercises of the renewed heart follow one another in this order or not, it is certain that those who are destitute of true love to men, are destitute of true love to God. The apostle John has decided this point. "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" And again he says, "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" The Priest and Levite were undoubtedly as destitute of love to God, as they were of love to the poor miserable object they saw, who ought to have excited their bowels of compassion and beneficence. I know it has been said that love to men flows from love to God; but the truth is, love to God flows from love to men, or the love of complacency flows from the love of benevolence. Men are as proper and direct objects of benevolence, as God is the proper and direct object of complacency. He, therefore, who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, and who is a proper object of benevolence, cannot love God whom he has not seen, and who is the supreme object of complacency. Pure, disinterested, universal benevolence is a plain and infallible criterion, by which men may determine whether they truly love God or not. By this criterion, the Priest and Levite might have easily determined that the love of God was not in their hearts; and by the same criterion, the good Samaritan might have determined that his heart was right with God. And where is the person that cannot understand this rule of trial, and apply it, and draw the just consequence from it?

If I should now ask every individual here present, Which of these three men in the parable, thinkest thou, acted the kind, friendly, benevolent, neighborly part towards the man that fell among the thieves? every one would answer, The good Samaritan. Let me then urge you to go and do likewise. Every person you see or meet, whether rich or poor, high or low, good or bad, suffering or rejoicing, is a proper object of benevolence. God is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; and you ought to be merciful as your Father in heaven

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is merciful. There are weighty motives to live in the constant exercise of universal benevolence. This duty is enjoined by the law of love. The exercise of general benevolence tends to diffuse general happiness every where; in families, in neighborhoods, in parishes, in towns, countries and kingdoms. How happy would the world be, if all would feel and act like the good Samaritan! The same benevolent spirit would produce universal complacency towards God, and cause all to rejoice in his character, in his laws and government. It would give every one good evidence that he is walking in the strait and narrow path to eternal life; and it is the only way to obtain it, as Christ told the man who desired to be directed in the only sure and certain way to heaven. And it is a perfectly easy way to obtain the favor of God and man, and the enjoyment of all good. It was as easy for the Priest and Levite to exercise true benevolence, as for the Samaritan. And it is as easy for every man to exercise true benevolence, as it was for him who pitied and relieved the poor, wounded, suffering, hopeless man. Why will you not immediately go and do likewise? You can gain nothing by delaying, but may gain much by the immediate exercise of pure, universal benevolence. It will give you the purest and greatest present happiness. It will instantly give you that inward peace, which passeth all understanding. For it is more blessed to give than to receive. How pleasantly did the benevolent Samaritan go on his way, after he had felt and expressed pure benevolence! Only do as he did, and you shall be as happy as he was. Amen.

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SERMON LXIII.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF HUMILITY.

And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. — Luke, xviii. 14.

Our Saviour spake this parable to certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. He meant to convince such self righteous and self deceived sinners of their guilty and dangerous situation. And nothing could be better adapted to answer this benevolent and important purpose, than to represent their inward views and feelings as diametrically opposite to the views and feelings of a true penitent. "Two men," said he, "went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This last clause in the parable naturally leads us, in the first place, to consider the nature of humility; and in the second place, the necessity of it, in order to obtain divine mercy.

I. We are to consider the nature of humility. There is the more occasion for describing this gracious exercise of heart with peculiar accuracy and precision, because mankind are naturally disposed to misunderstand and misrepresent it. Mr. Hume scrupled not to say, that "humility ought to be struck off from

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the catalogue of *virtues*, and placed on the catalogue of *vices*." This must have been owing to his gross ignorance, or extreme malignity. The most charitable supposition is, that he really mistook a mere selfish and painful sense of natural inferiority for true humility.

This leads me to observe, that a man's humbling himself is something very different from his having a mistaken and reluctant sense of his own inferiority in relation to his fellow mortals. Though men generally think too highly of themselves in respect to their inferiors, yet they as generally think too meanly of themselves in comparison with their superiors. The truth is, mankind are much more upon a level, in point of natural excellences and imperfections, than many are willing to acknowledge. The depressing sense which some entertain of their natural inferiority, is greatly owing to their ignorance. But knowledge, and not ignorance, is the mother of both humility and devotion. Those who know the most of God, of themselves, and of their fellow men, may be the most humble and devout persons in the world. There is a meanness and criminality in that voluntary humility, which the apostle mentions and condemns.

Humility is likewise different from submission, which seems to resemble it. Submission is the respect which an inferior justly owes to a superior. The child owes submission to the parent, the subject to the prince, and the creature to the great Creator. But inferiors manifest no humility in submitting to their superiors. They only take their proper place, without sinking or degrading themselves in the least degree.

Farthermore, humility is something different from condescension, which is the part of a superior, and consists in stooping to an inferior. Thus the Creator may condescend to a creature, the prince to a subject, the rich to the poor, and the aged to the young. But though condescension stoops, yet it is by no means degrading. Real condescension always displays a noble and amiable spirit. I may now safely say that humility essentially consists in self abasement, which is self degradation, or a voluntary sinking, not only below others, but below ourselves. It is, therefore, wholly founded in guilt. None but guilty creatures have any cause or reason for abasing themselves. But every guilty creature ought to abase himself, whether he is willing or unwilling to perform the mortifying duty. For sin is of a degrading nature, and always sinks the sinner below himself. Sin degraded Satan from the highest to the lowest creature in the universe. The moment he rebelled against his Maker, he lost his original rank in creation, and sunk below himself and all the holy angels. Sin degraded Adam, and his first offence

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sunk him below the lowest creature on earth. Sin has had the same effect upon all his posterity, and made them more vile and abominable than the beasts that perish. The higher and nobler any intelligent creatures are by nature, the lower and meaner they become by sin.

Hence, the humility which sinners ought to exercise, consists altogether in self abasement. They ought voluntarily to sink down to that place which their sins deserve, or to be willing to lie as much below themselves and others, as their guilt can sink them. This is totally different from mere abasement. They may be abased, and abased as low as they deserve to be abased, involuntarily, and while they are actually aspiring to rise above themselves and others; but there is no humility in such constrained and involuntary abasement. Satan is the subject of this kind of abasement, while his heart is full of pride and self exaltation. But when the guilty are heartily willing to lie as low as their sins deserve, then they really abase themselves, and exercise true humility. This is the feeling which all sinners ought to have, and which every one must have who is finally raised to the kingdom of glory. And this is only feeling according to truth. Sin has degraded every sinner, and he must be willing to degrade himself, and voluntarily take the place which justly belongs to him. Such self abasement is the very essence of that humility which all men ought to exercise. As there is nothing but sin that can really degrade us, so there is nothing but sin that calls for real humility. It belongs not to innocent, but only to guilty creatures, to humble themselves. Sinners have forfeited their natural rank among the creatures of God, and ought to abase themselves before him. This always appears perfectly proper to true penitents, who are sensible of their ill desert, and have correspondent feelings towards themselves, and towards God, whom they have injured and offended.

And now, if we look into the scripture, we shall find humility there represented as founded in guilt, and consisting in self abasement. In the twenty sixth chapter of Leviticus, God said concerning Israel, in case they should prove disobedient and forfeit his favor, "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land." It appears from this divine declaration, that humility is occasioned by guilt, and consists in self abasement, or the voluntary accepting of the punishment due to sin. To such a spirit God always brings sinners, when he renews their hearts and prepares them for mercy. The prophet speaking of a time of general reformation

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says, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." These representations of humility may be illustrated by various examples, recorded in the Old and New Testament. Jacob felt that humility which consists in self abasement, when he said unto God, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant."

David exercised that humility which consists in self abasement, under a sense of what he had deserved at the hand of God for numbering the people. When he saw the angel of the Lord brandishing his sword over Jerusalem, he humbly said unto God, "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? Even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed. But as for these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house." This was real and deep humiliation for sin. It was voluntarily sinking down as low as God should please to abase him. Job felt and expressed the same self abasing spirit under the chastising hand of God. In the depth of his complicated afflictions he said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." And when he was reproached for such self abasement, he pertinently replied, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" This shows that his humiliation flowed from a sense of guilt and unworthiness in the sight of God. Our Saviour himself set up the publican's prayer as a proper example of that humility which becomes a sinner, and which will always meet the divine approbation. While the Pharisee boasted of his innocence and goodness, the publican confessed his guilt, and humbly cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This man was accepted, and the other rejected. This man was willing to abase himself, but the other exalted himself. This man was humble, but the other was proud and self righteous. The prodigal son, when he came to himself, felt the spirit and spoke the language of real humility. He said to himself, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." He freely confessed that he had sinned, that he had sunk his character, that he had degraded himself below the rank of a son, and therefore declared that he was willing to take the low and ignoble place of a servant. Paul was a very humble man, and his humility consisted in self abasement for sin. He once said he was "less than the least of

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all saints;" by which he meant that he was the most guilty and ill deserving in the sight of God. So he explains this seeming paradox in another passage. "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, *because I persecuted the church of God.* But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all." Here it is very evident that Paul's humility did not arise from ignorance of his own superior talents and services. He does not pretend that he had less knowledge or less grace, than the other apostles; but only that he had more guilt, because he persecuted the followers of Christ. And on this account, he was undoubtedly the most guilty and unworthy of all the apostles, and ought to lie the lowest before God, which he has done, and will do to all eternity. Having shown what it is for sinners to humble themselves before God, I proceed to show,

II. That they must do this, in order to obtain pardoning mercy.

Our Saviour declares that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," meaning that none but such as humble themselves shall obtain pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. For he says, in the conclusion of the parable, "This man," meaning the humble publican, "went down to his house justified," pardoned and accepted, "rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The whole current of scripture teaches sinners that they must humble themselves before God, in order to find favor in his sight. The apostle says to them, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." David declares, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." There is a propriety, and even necessity, that sinners should exercise such humility or self abasement, in order to obtain divine mercy. For,

1. God cannot consistently receive them into his favor, before they voluntarily humble themselves for their transgressions in his sight. They have hated, disobeyed and opposed him without a cause. They have despised and rejected the Son of his love. They have grieved and quenched his Holy Spirit. They have abused his goodness and forbearance, and rendered

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themselves objects of his holy displeasure. He cannot, therefore, consistently with the purity of his nature and the dignity of his character, receive them into his special favor, until they freely and of their own accord abase themselves before him. Though Christ has made atonement for their sins, so that justice may be displayed in their forgiveness, yet God cannot forgive them, consistently with his honor and dignity, until they freely and voluntarily take their proper places before their righteous and injured Sovereign. This is agreeable to the common sentiment of mankind, in regard to the proper conduct of the offended towards offenders. The prince will not forgive the subject, the superior will not forgive the inferior, nor will any person forgive another, until the offender manifest humiliation and self abasement. And it much less becomes the supreme Majesty of heaven to forgive the transgressor, until he humbles himself before him, and sincerely cries like the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If God should return to sinners before they return to him, he would humble himself before them, instead of their humbling themselves before him. He cannot deny himself nor give his glory to another. He can no more act below his dignity, than he can act contrary to his wisdom, holiness, or justice. There is, therefore, a moral necessity of sinners humbling themselves before him, in order to obtain his special and everlasting favor. Besides,

2. It is impossible for sinners to receive divine mercy before they take their proper places, and are willing to sink as low as divine justice can sink them. If it were possible for God consistently to pardon and receive them into his favor before they humble themselves for their sins, yet they could not receive pardon and acceptance from the hand of God, as an expression of mere mercy. God cannot show mercy in pardoning, where he cannot show justice in punishing. If God cannot justly punish sinners for ever for their sins, then he cannot display mercy in saving them from everlasting punishment. And if sinners do not see and approve of his justice in punishing them, they cannot see and cordially acknowledge his mercy in pardoning their transgressions, and saving them from future and eternal misery. It is true, they might be glad if God would not inflict upon them an unjust and undeserved punishment, but they could not consider his withholding punishment as an act of mercy. It is, therefore, indispensably necessary, that they should humble themselves in his sight before he lifts them up. They must voluntarily sink themselves, before they can submissively desire him to save them from sinking for ever under his just displeasure. They must of their own accord lay their necks on the block, before they can sincerely plead to

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be saved from death. Though they can, while totally unhumbled, talk about the mercy of God, and in words plead for mercy, yet they cannot cordially accept of his mercy, until they see and love his justice, and freely resign themselves into his hands, to save or destroy, as shall be most for his glory. The humility which God requires of sinners as the condition of pardoning mercy, is not an arbitrary but an indispensable condition. It is founded in the character of sinners, and cannot be separated from them. Their guilt calls for humility, and they cannot be released from exercising it, if they are eventually saved. Mercy cannot come to them in any other channel than that of humility; because God cannot grant, and they cannot receive mercy, before their hearts are humbled. And there is no humility, but that which consists in self abasement, which can prepare them to receive mere mercy from the hand of God, who may in strict justice doom them to everlasting destruction.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If humility essentially consists in self abasement for sin, then we may safely suppose that neither God the Father, nor the Lord Jesus Christ, ever exercised any affection which may be strictly called humility. These divine persons never had the least occasion to humble themselves for any unwise or unholy or improper conduct, towards any created or uncreated object in the universe. David, indeed, under a lively and solemn sense of the divine majesty, exclaims, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; who *humbleth* himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!" These expressions naturally convey the idea of condescension, which may stoop; but not the idea of humility, which is degrading. It becomes the supreme Being to condescend or stoop to his creatures, but not to abase or degrade himself before them. And as it was the design of the Psalmist to exalt, and not to degrade the Deity, we ought to interpret his expressions agreeably to his plain and obvious meaning. These observations will equally apply to and explain what the apostle says concerning the humiliation of Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he *humbled* himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It was indeed a glorious act of condescension in Christ, who was equal with the Father, to obey his will, and suffer and die, not

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for his own sins, but for the sins of the world. Though divine condescension and human condescension are the same species of holy affection, yet neither divine nor human condescension is the same species of affection as self abasement. Strict and proper humility, therefore, may not be ascribed to God or Christ, but only to penitent and self abased sinners.

2. If humility consists in self abasement, we may clearly see how low sinners must lie before God, in order to obtain his pardoning mercy. It is generally believed that they must humble themselves in some measure; but it is a serious and interesting question, how low they must fall before their injured and offended Sovereign. Some evangelical and experimental writers have maintained, that they ought to lie as low as their sins deserve, and to be willing that God should treat them according to their demerit. But it seems to be the more common opinion of great and pious divines, that sinners are not obliged to lie so deeply abased before God. These two opinions are not only diverse from, but directly opposite to each other, because there is no medium between sinners being willing or unwilling to suffer the due punishment of their sins. The plain and important question now is, which of these opposite opinions is agreeable to truth. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that sinners ought to abase themselves before God for their sin, and that they ought to abase themselves as low as their sin deserves. And in the language of the Assembly of divines: "Sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life and in that which is to come." This answer agrees with what the inspired writers say upon the subject. The apostle declares, "The wages of sin is death." And our Saviour says, that he will adjudge the finally impenitent to this punishment at the last day: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Such a punishment every sin deserves, and such a punishment every finally impenitent sinner must for ever suffer. All penitent and self abased sinners must therefore be willing to suffer the wrath and curse of God for ever. But still it may be inquired what is implied in this willingness. It does not imply love to pain or misery, but only a love to that benevolent justice which inflicts it. All the impenitent at the day of judgment will see the justice of God in casting them off for ever, while their hearts will rise in enmity against their holy and righteous Judge, for giving them the due reward of their deeds. But those who are abased for sin, *love* that justice of God which they see and feel would be displayed, if he should actually treat them according to their demerit. They are, therefore, willing that God should glorify himself by them, either

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by making them happy or making them miserable for ever. Though they ardently desire to be saved, yet they are willing to give up their own personal good, if the glory of God, which is an infinitely greater good, requires it. Such a willingness that God should dispose of them for his own glory, is absolutely necessary, in order to accept of pardoning mercy, and, indeed, in order to enjoy the happiness of heaven. For how could they be happy in seeing God treat other sinners according to their deserts, if they were never willing that he should treat them in the same manner? Or how could they say, "Amen, Alleluia," while they saw the smoke of the torments of the damned ascending for ever and ever, if they were never willing to lie down in everlasting sorrow?

Judas and Paul were both once sinners, and deserved to be destroyed; Judas for betraying Christ, and Paul for persecuting him in his followers. But Paul was saved, and Judas was rejected. Suppose these two remarkable persons should meet, and Judas should ask Paul whether he was ever willing that God should cast him off, and treat him according to his deserts? What answer can we suppose that Paul would give to this pertinent and solemn question? He must say, either that he was, or that he was not, willing that God should cast him off for ever. If he should say that he never was willing that God should cast him off for ever, would not Judas reply, Paul, you and I are perfectly agreed in our sentiments and feelings upon this solemn subject; for I was never willing that God should cast me off for ever. There is only a circumstantial difference between us. Let God only put me in your place, and you in my place, and I shall love and praise him as you do, and you will hate and blaspheme him as I do. Could Paul deny these consequences of being unwilling to be cast off for ever? But it would be entirely different if Paul should say to Judas, I remember the time, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. I then said, the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. And ever since that time, I have delighted in the law of God after the inward man; and I still delight in it, and would, with my present feelings, delight in it, if I were fixed in your place for ever. My heart is essentially different from what it was once, and from what yours always was, and always will be. I know what it is to be in a condemned state, and to love God for condemning me; I can therefore love God for condemning you as he condemned me, and for casting you off for ever, as he might have justly cast me off for ever. It is because I have thus cordially accepted the punishment of my iniquity, that I can say, It is by the grace of God, that I am what I am, and where I am. So low Paul

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abased himself, and so low must every one abase himself, in order to be finally exalted.

3. If humility consists in a free and voluntary self abasement for sin, then it is the most amiable and shining exercise of a holy heart. The truly humble person lies as low as he deserves to lie, and takes his proper place, as a sinner, freely and of his own accord. This is exercising a more amiable and self denying spirit than any innocent creature ever did, or ever can exercise. It appears amiable and beautiful in the principalities and powers above, to fall down in cheerful and unreserved submission before the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth; but it appears much more beautiful and amiable in Adam, Abraham, Moses, Samuel and the prophets, Paul and the apostles, to fall down in cheerful self abasement before the throne of divine grace, and ascribe their salvation wholly to Him who was slain, and redeemed them unto God by his blood. The humility of all who finally reach the kingdom of glory, will be the most beautiful trait in their character, and render them most amiable in the eyes of all the pure and innocent spirits, who have always been joyfully employed in the service of their Maker.

Finally, it appears from this whole discourse that nothing short of real, cordial self abasement, can qualify any of our sinful race to obtain and enjoy the happiness of heaven. Many have desired and endeavored to get to heaven without performing the mortifying duty of self abasement. The Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, trusted in himself that he was righteous, and should obtain salvation by his mere external duties of religion and morality. Paul once built his hopes of heaven upon his blameless, beautiful, self righteous conduct. But the Pharisee was rejected, and Paul was disappointed. It is utterly in vain for impenitent and unhumbled sinners to hope that any of their desires, or prayers, or self righteousness, will qualify them for the favor and enjoyment of God. Every thing they say, desire, or do, while destitute of humility, is nothing but self exaltation, which is diametrically opposite to a holy and heavenly spirit. God knows the proud afar off, and will never admit them to dwell in his presence. Sinners must be clothed with humility, before God will exalt them to his heavenly kingdom, and before they can possibly be happy there.

It is therefore the present indispensable duty of all self righteous and self confident sinners, to humble themselves before God. Upon this necessary and condescending condition, he will save them from ruin, and exalt them to glory. And surely, those who have injured and offended him by their groundless disaffection to his character, and disobedience to his law, ought

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to humble themselves deeply before him, and plead for his pardoning mercy. And if they will only give up all their self righteous and self justifying pleas, and humbly cry with the poor publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" he will hear and answer and save them. But if they continue to exalt themselves, he will effectually humble them. He has appointed a day, in which he will expose all their turpitude and guilt to the view of the whole universe. He has appointed a Judge to condemn them, and to doom them to everlasting shame and contempt. And to complete their humiliation, he has appointed a song of triumph to be sung over them to all eternity. And can their hands be strong, or their hearts endure, in the day that God shall thus deal with them? No, they must sink down into everlasting despair. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, who will render vengeance to his enemies, and reward them that hate him.

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SERMON LXIV.

PRAYER OF MOSES.

Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. — Exodus, xxxii. 32.

About three months after the Israelites left Egypt, they came and encamped at the foot of Sinai. There God called Moses into the mount, to deliver to him the ten commandments, written with his own finger on two tables of stone. But when the people saw that Moses delayed to come from the mount, "they gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." It is strange that the people should make this request; and stranger still, that Aaron should comply with it. For they had seen the miracles which God had wrought in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness of Sin and at Rephidim; and had heard the voice of God speaking to them out of the thick darkness, which covered Mount Sinai. To forget and to forsake God so soon, and run into the grossest idolatry, was extremely displeasing to him. He therefore said unto Moses, "Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way, which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people; and behold, it is a stiff necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax

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hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." This alluring motive of personal preferment, instead of awakening the least selfish feeling in the heart of Moses, only excited his tender, disinterested desire for the good of his sinful people, which he expressed with peculiar propriety and importunity. "And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." Thus Moses interceded with God, to spare his people, before he came down from the mount. When he came down and drew near to the camp, he cast the tables out of his hands and dashed them to pieces. Then he destroyed the graven image, and severely reproved Aaron for making it. On the morrow, he said to the people, "Ye have sinned a great sin; and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin. And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold: Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." In order to explain this difficult passage of scripture, it is proposed,

I. To inquire to what book Moses here refers;

II. To inquire what was the true import of his request;

III. To inquire whether it was a proper one.

I. We are to inquire to what book Moses refers in the text. He says to God, "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Various opinions have been entertained concerning this book. But passing over the opinions of others, I would observe, that Moses could not mean the book of God's remembrance. The prophet Malachi speaks of such a book. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name." This is a figurative expression to denote that God has as perfect knowledge of all the past actions of his people, as they have of those things which they write down, to assist their recollection. It would indeed have been a

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great act of self denial, had Moses desired to be blotted out of God's remembrance, and denied all tokens of his favor through life. But Moses must have known that there was not only a moral, but a natural impossibility of God's blotting his name out of the book of his remembrance. God cannot cease to remember, any more than he can cease to exist. It was naturally impossible for God to forget Moses, or any of his great and glorious deeds in teaching and guiding his people. We must therefore look for some other book which God had written, in order to find that to which Moses refers. And there is another book of God, often mentioned in scripture, which is called the book of life, and contains the names of all whom he designs to save from the wrath to come, and admit to heaven. David alludes to this book in the sixty-ninth psalm, where he says, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous." The same book of life is mentioned in the twelfth chapter of Daniel. "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince, which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Taking this whole passage together, there can be no doubt that the prophet meant, by "every one written in the book," every one written in the book of life. Our Saviour evidently referred to the book of life, when he said to the seventy disciples, who rejoiced in the success of their ministry, "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, speaks of his fellow laborers, "whose names are in the book of life." Christ says in the third chapter of Revelation, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." In the thirteenth chapter, it is said of the beast that rose out of the sea, "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him; whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And in the twentieth chapter, the apostle John says, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." In these passages God is represented as having written a book of life, in which he has inserted the

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names of all mankind whom he has chosen, elected, or set apart for himself from the foundation of the world; and whom he will finally admit into his kingdom of glory. To this book of life Moses might properly refer in the text. And it plainly appears that he did refer to this book, by the answer God gave to his request, in the words immediately following it. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." This was as much as to say, "Moses, I have indeed a book written as you suppose, which contains the names of those whom I have chosen to life before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before me in love. Your name, therefore, I will not blot out of my book, but the names of those only who have sinned and deserved to be blotted out." No person, perhaps, would have thought that Moses could have referred to any other book than the book of life, had it not been to avoid the literal sense of his petition, which many are loath to believe and acknowledge. But it is safest and best to follow the general analogy of scripture, in explaining particular passages. And according to this rule of interpreting the text under consideration, we are warranted to say that Moses meant to refer to the book of life. Let us now inquire,

II. What was the import of his request, when he said to God, "Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Here are two things requested, and both conditionally. Moses prays, if it were consistent with the will of God, that he would pardon the sin of his people in making the golden calf. "Now if thou wilt, forgive their sin." He prayed for the exercise of pardoning mercy towards the people conditionally, because God had seemed to intimate that he intended to destroy them, by saying, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them." Moses had reason to fear that God would, at all events, withhold his pardoning mercy. And therefore to render his intercession more forcible and prevalent, and to express his most ardent desire for their forgiveness, he prays again conditionally: "And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." This was implicitly saying, "O Lord, since thou hast proposed to spare me and destroy thy people, I pray that thou wouldest rather blot me out of the book of life, and spare them. If thy glory require that either they or I must be destroyed, I pray thee spare them and destroy me. Their salvation is unspeakably more important than mine; and I am willing to give up my salvation, if it might be a means, or occasion, of preventing their final ruin." This seems to be the true import of Moses' conditional request, which directly met

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God's proposal to him. And no doubt God made such a proposal to him, for the very purpose of drawing out the ardent and benevolent feelings of the most benevolent heart then in the world. God knew beforehand how Moses would feel and what he would say, if he proposed to spare him, and destroy his whole nation. He meant to exhibit the most striking contrast possible, between the benevolent spirit of Moses and the selfish spirit of his ungrateful and rebellious people. And the sincere, though conditional prayer of Moses, under the existing circumstances, did set the superlative beauty and excellence of disinterested love in the fairest and strongest light. As God expressed his peculiar love to Moses conditionally, so Moses expressed his love to God conditionally. But as God's love was as sincere as if it had not been conditionally expressed, so Moses' love was as sincere, as if it had been expressed unconditionally. Moses, therefore, expressed as true, real, sincere willingness to give up his eternal interests for the glory of God and the good of his nation, as if he had actually made the sacrifice, and God had actually destroyed him and saved his nation on his account. And such a willingness to give up all his own interests for the eternal happiness of his people, was the highest expression of pure, disinterested benevolence, that he, or any other man in his situation, could possibly feel and express. It now only remains to inquire,

III. Whether this petition of Moses, taken in the sense in which it has been explained, was a proper one. It must be universally believed that it was a proper petition, taken in the sense which Moses intended; but many doubt whether it was proper, taken in the sense just given to it. They seem to think that it could not be proper for Moses, or for any other man, under any situation whatever, to be willing, and even to pray, that God would blot out his name from the book of life and devote him to endless misery, either to save a nation, or even the whole universe. They insist that self preservation is the first law of nature; and that no consideration ought to make any person willing to give up all his interests for ever, to prevent the misery, or promote the happiness of others. It is, therefore, a very serious and important inquiry, whether it could have been proper for Moses, for any reason whatever, to pray God to blot out his name from the book of life. But perhaps this petition, in the most literal, obvious and important sense, will appear to have been altogether proper and becoming in Moses, if we impartially consider the following things. And,

1. It appears to have been perfectly acceptable to God. He did not rebuke him for a rash request, but on the other hand, plainly intimated that he was highly pleased with his noble,

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disinterested desire. Instead of saying, I will blot out thy name from the book of life, in answer to your rash and sinful request, he says, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." This was virtually saying that he would not blot out Moses from the book of life, for he had not sinned in making the graven image, nor in requesting to be destroyed in the room of those who had deserved to be blotted out of the book of life. If God had not approved of his petition, he would undoubtedly have reproved him for it; because it was either a very good or a very bad petition, which ought to be highly approved or highly condemned. But no person in the world can discover any evil in such a pure, noble, benevolent desire. And since God did not condemn it, we may safely conclude that it was highly acceptable in his sight.

2. It was perfectly agreeable to the dictates of reason and conscience, that Moses should have been willing to give up all his own personal interests, to promote the glory of God and the future and eternal good of his nation. He supposed that the glory of God was greatly concerned in the preservation of his people from deserved destruction; and he plead this as the most powerful argument to move God to forgive and spare them. "And Moses besought the Lord his God and said, O Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever." Moses viewed the glory of God and the lasting good of Israel, as being at stake; and rather than these great interests should be given up, by the ruin of the chosen people of God, he chose that his own name and interests should be lost for ever. And could he hesitate as a conscientious and pious man, when God proposed the alternative of his giving up his own interests to preserve the lasting interests of a whole nation, and promote his glory through the earth, could he, I say, hesitate what to do? Suppose that, when God proposed to destroy Israel and make of him a great nation, he had said, I pray thee do as thou hast proposed, make of me a great nation, and blot out Israel from the book of life; would such a request have appeared amiable, or virtuous, or accordant with the pious character of Moses? Or would it have appeared agreeable to

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the dictates of any other man's reason and conscience? But was there not something extremely noble, virtuous and honorable in the reply Moses made to God's proposal? "Yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written."

3. The petition of Moses was agreeable to the very law of love. God requires all men to love him with all their heart, and their neighbor as themselves. That is, he requires all men to love him supremely, and to love all their fellow creatures in proportion to their worth and importance in the scale of being. This law required Moses to feel and speak as he did, in the situation God had placed him in, and in the view of the proposal he had made to him. God conditionally proposed to destroy his nation and spare him. In this view of his own and of his people's situation, the law of love required him, conditionally, to desire that God would spare his people and destroy him; because the glory of God and the good of his people were unspeakably more valuable than all his own personal good. Had he, therefore, preferred his own personal good to the glory of God and the good of his people, he would not have loved God supremely, nor his people according to their worth and importance, which would have been a violation of the law of love. For in that case he would have loved himself more than the glory of God and the good of his people to all eternity. The inference is irresistible, that he ought to have desired God to glorify himself, and to promote the everlasting good of his people, though at the expense of all his own interest for ever.

4. The request of Moses was perfectly agreeable to the spirit which Christ uniformly expressed through the whole course of his life on earth. He always gave up a less good of his own, for a greater good of others. He endured all the labors, pains, and reproaches of life, obeying his Father's will, and doing good to men. At length he came to the trying hour, when he must either give up his own life, or the life of the world and the glory of God. At that time he made a conditional request to his Father, and repeated it three times, saying, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." If one or the other must be given up, either his Father's glory and the salvation of sinners, or his own life, he desired to give up his own life, and did actually give it up. Now the prayer of Moses expressed the same spirit that the prayer of Christ expressed. If Christ's prayer was conditionally proper, then the prayer of Moses was conditionally proper. They neither of them desired to suffer, simply considered; but both were willing to suffer for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners. There is therefore, pre-

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cisely the same reason to suppose that the prayer of Moses was proper, as to suppose the prayer of Christ was proper. God placed them both in a trying situation, in which they were obliged to pray either selfishly, or benevolently; and they both prayed benevolently and properly. They both expressed the purest love to God and man; and their example is worthy of universal imitation. For the apostle John says, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." I may add,

5. That the prayer of Moses was proper, because it was agreeable to the prayers and practice of other good men. Paul said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Yea, he did solemnly declare, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Moses did not express a greater willingness to be blotted out of the book of life, than Paul did when he said he was willing to be accursed from Christ, to answer the same purpose which Moses desired might be answered by his being blotted out of the book of life. Moses prayed as properly as Paul did; and they both prayed agreeably to the spirit of the primitive christians, who were willing to lay down their lives for the brethren. Paul says, "Great Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ; who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." In a word, the prayer of Moses appears to be proper, because it was agreeable to the character and law of God, to the character and conduct of Christ, to the character and conduct of the primitive christians, and to the nature of pure, disinterested love, which always prefers the glory of God and the good of the universe, to all personal considerations. There is every kind of evidence to believe that the request of Moses in the text was perfectly proper and highly pleasing to God.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the prayer of Moses in the text was proper and acceptable to God, then true love to God and man is, strictly speaking, disinterested love. Moses expressed a love, which was not only without interest, but contrary to interest. He not only loved God more than himself, and his nation more than himself, but he loved both God and his nation in opposition to himself. He desired that the glory of God and the good of his nation might be promoted, not only in contrariety to part of his own good, but in contrariety to all his own good. This was,

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strictly speaking, disinterested love. It was not merely supreme love, or universal love, or impartial love, but truly disinterested love. Many will allow that true love is impartial, universal and supreme, while they strenuously deny that it is properly disinterested. Some criticise upon the Greek preposition *dis*, and say it properly signifies twice, or double, rather than contrariety. This is a groundless assertion. No English writers use it in this sense, but always use it to signify contrariety; as in these words, *disease*, *disorder*, *displeasure*, *disunion*, *discord*, *disobedience;* and in a multitude of other words compounded of the preposition *dis*. No other adjective can fully express the peculiar nature of pure, virtuous, holy love to God, or man; and distinguish it essentially from selfishness. If a selfish man should believe that God loved him, and intended to employ all his perfections and all his creatures and works to promote his private separate happiness in time and eternity, he might exercise a species of supreme, impartial, and universal love. He certainly might exercise universal love; that is, love to God and to all his creatures. He might exercise supreme love; that is, love God more than all his creatures, except himself. And he might exercise impartial love; that is, love God and all his creatures in proportion to their worth and importance to promote his happiness. This is not a mere visionary supposition. There is reason to fear that there are many, who imagine they love God supremely, and all his creatures impartially, while they are under the reigning power of a carnal mind, or selfish heart. Those who love God merely because they suppose he loves them, naturally extend their selfish love to God and all his creatures; for while they view God and all his creatures as unitedly promoting their future and everlasting good, it is as natural to love them as to love themselves. There is a sense in which self love may be supreme, universal and impartial; but there is no sense in which it is disinterested. It is this disinterestedness of holy love, that most properly and fully distinguishes it from unholy, sinful love. It is just as necessary and important to maintain that true love to God and man is disinterested, as to maintain the distinction between virtue and vice, sin and holiness, saints and sinners. For take away the distinction between selfishness and disinterested benevolence, and it is impossible to prove that there is any such thing as either moral good, or evil, or any essential difference between the best and worst of men.

2. If the conditional prayer of Moses was proper, then it is impossible to carry the duty of disinterested benevolence too far. It is often supposed, by those who profess to believe that there is such a thing as disinterested benevolence required in

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the gospel, that it may be carried too far. Though they allow that one man ought to love another as himself, yet they deny that he ought to love him more than himself. Though they allow that men ought to love God supremely, yet they deny that they ought to love him more than all their temporal and eternal interests. And they think that those who carry the duty of benevolence, or self denial, to such an extensive and high degree, carry it to an unreasonable and unscriptural height. They can bear to be told that man ought to give up his temporal interest, when it becomes absolutely necessary in order to secure his eternal interest, or to secure the eternal interests of others; but they cannot believe that a man ought to give up his eternal interests for the honor of God and the salvation of others. They do not presume to call in question the duty of the primitive christians in forsaking fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, for the sake of Christ and the salvation of their own souls. But they think that Paul and Moses carried disinterested benevolence too far, when they professed to be willing to give up their own eternal interests for the glory of God and the salvation of his people. They allow that a man may give up any or all of his temporal interests, if it be necessary, in order to secure his future and eternal interests. But they strenuously deny that it can ever be his duty to give up all his eternal interests, for the sake of the glory of God and the good of the universe. If such persons would only consider the nature and tendency of disinterested benevolence, they would clearly see that it cannot be carried too far. For it is the very nature of it to give up a less good of our own for the greater apparent good of others. The same disinterested benevolence which will dispose a man to give up a small good of his own for a greater good of another, will dispose him to give up a greater good of his own for a still greater good of another. The same disinterested benevolence which disposes a man to give up one part of his own interest to promote the interests of others, will dispose him to give up another part of his interests to promote the interests of others. And the same disinterested benevolence which disposes a man to give up any part of his own interests for the good of others, will dispose him to give up all his interests for the greater interests of others. There may be the same reason for a man's giving up all he has for the good of others, as for giving up any thing he has for the good of others. It is the same thing, according to the doctrine of benevolence and the doctrine of Christ, to give up all a man has for the good of others, as to give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple. The spirit of the gospel is a spirit of disinterested benevolence, which knows no bounds and admits of

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no limitations of self denial, in promoting the glory of God and the good of others. This is agreeable to Christ's express declaration to his followers. "Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

3. If the prayer of Moses was proper, then none ought to be willing to be lost, only conditionally. He did not unconditionally desire that God would blot him out of the book of life, and banish him from his blissful presence for ever. He had seen God face to face, and conversed with him as a man converses with his friend. He had seen the moral excellence and glory of God, and sincerely desired to see more and more of it; for he humbly said to him, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." He esteemed the glory of God and the everlasting enjoyment of him as infinitely more desirable and valuable than all the treasures of Egypt, or than all the treasures of the world. He did not desire to be blotted out of the book of life, simply considered; but dreaded it above all other evils that could fall upon him. His desire was altogether conditional. It was only, if need be, that he was willing to be cast away for ever. If it was necessary that he should perish, to prevent the utter destruction of his nation, he was willing to sacrifice all his hopes and happiness for the glory of God and their eternal good. Just so, no person ought to be willing to be cast off for ever, simply considered, but only conditionally, if the glory of God and the good of the universe require it. But you may now ask, as has often been asked, what right has any person to make the supposition that the glory of God and the good of the universe may require that he should finally perish? The answer is plain and easy to be understood. It is because the glory of God and the good of the universe have required that Pharaoh, Judas and Balaam should be destroyed. And we know that the glory of God and the good of the universe will require that all the non-elect should be destroyed. No sinner, therefore, before he is regenerated, knows that it is consistent with the glory of God and the good of the universe, that he should be saved; and of course he has a right to make the supposition, that the glory of God and the good of the universe may require his destruction as well as that of any other sinner. And in this state of uncertainty, he is constrained to make the supposition that he may be finally cast off; and when he makes the supposition, he cannot help being willing or unwilling that God should cast him off. I scruple not to say that every sinner under genuine conviction is brought to this trial—whether he is willing or unwilling that God should cast him off; and that no such sinner is willing to be cast off, before he is made willing by the renovation of his heart. The doubting christian is

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brought to the same trial as the convinced sinner. For he does not know that he is a real christian, or that he ever shall be. In this doubting situation, he is constrained to suppose that he may be lost. He must then be either willing or unwilling to be cast off. If he be unwilling, his unwillingness is an evidence against him; and he can find no evidence in his favor, until he feels willing that God should dispose of him as shall be most for his glory. Nothing short of this can give him good ground of hope and comfort. I know of no truth of more practical importance than this, that every person, in order to be saved, must be conditionally willing that God should dispose of him, for time and eternity, as shall be most for his glory and the good of the universe.

4. If the prayer of Moses was proper and sincere, then those who possess his spirit, are the best friends of sinners. The sinners in Israel had no better friend than Moses. He was the most desirous of their temporal and eternal good, and was willing to do the most to promote it. He was continually praying for them, which prevented them from suffering many evils to which they were greatly exposed, and drew down many great and distinguishing blessings upon them. And had it been necessary, he was ready to give up all his own interests, to promote their future and eternal interests. And what more could he desire or do for them. Though christians in general have not so large a portion of pure, impartial, disinterested and universal benevolence as Moses had, yet they all have some portion of it, which disposes them to desire and promote the temporal and eternal good of sinners. Though they have no disposition to take them out of the hands of God, yet it is their hearts' desire and prayer to him, that they may be saved. They not only pray for them, but they instruct them, advise them and admonish them, in regard to their duties and dangers. Nor do they neglect to exercise their proper power and influence, to restrain them from all the paths of the destroyer. But, alas! they too often misunderstand, misrepresent and abuse such benevolent conduct. Nevertheless, christians, like Moses and Samuel, do not cease to pray for them, but continue to say to God, as the leper said to Christ, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." They believe that they are within the reach of divine power and mercy, and that God may be waiting to be gracious to them, which animates them to persevere in their benevolent desires and exertions; though they know, if the glory of God and the interests of his kingdom require their destruction, that the intercessions of Noah, Job and Daniel cannot prevent it.

5. If the prayer of Moses was proper and sincere, then

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none can pray sincerely for any good, without being willing to do whatever is necessary on their part to obtain it. They cannot pray for the poor sincerely, without being willing to do whatever is necessary and proper on their part to assist, support and comfort them. They cannot sincerely say to the naked and destitute, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled," while they are not willing to give them those things which are needful to the body. They cannot pray sincerely for the spiritual good of a person, or of a people, or of the world, without being willing to do all that is proper on their part to promote and secure the spiritual blessings prayed for. Moses appears to have been sincere in his intercessions for his people, because he was willing to do and suffer any thing which he believed to be proper and necessary to promote and secure their temporal and eternal good. His prayers, and faith, and works were consistent and sincere, and of vast benefit to the people of God. If christians would follow the example of Moses, and act as consistently with their intercessions for others, they would avail much in drawing down the blessings of providence and grace upon individuals, societies, and all the nations of the earth. All the blessings which God has yet to bestow upon mankind, he means to bestow in answer to the effectual, fervent, sincere prayers of his people. He has set them apart for himself, and they have devoted themselves to him. They have a serious and important part to act on the stage of life, and their own interests and the interests of all mankind are lodged in their hands; and it highly behooves them to be faithful to God, to themselves, and to the world.

6. If the conditional prayer of Moses was proper and acceptable to God, then the prayers of the people of God are always heard and answered. They always pray, as Moses did, conditionally. They pray for nothing unconditionally nor unsubmissively. They never know what it is best for God to grant, or to deny. Moses did not know whether it was best for God to forgive his people, though he ardently desired it; and therefore he prayed conditionally and submissively for their forgiveness. This was acceptable to God, and he granted his request; and if he had refused to forgive them, still he would have granted his request; just as he granted Christ's request, though he denied what he prayed for in particular. God knows what is best for a person or a people, better than they do; and this, christians believe to be true; and accordingly refer it to God to grant, or deny the particular favors they plead for; and he always either grants what they ask, or gives them something better, so that their petitions are always answered. He never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." To pray in

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faith is not to pray in a certain belief of God's granting what is prayed for; but to pray in faith is to pray in a belief that he will do what is wisest and best to be done, and in cordial submission to the divine disposal. This is all the assurance that christians ought to desire to have, to encourage their intercession for others. It is all that Moses had to encourage him to pray for himself and others. And men would have reason to be afraid to pray, if they knew beforehand that God would certainly give them the very things they prayed for. For they might desire and pray for things that would prove a curse to them and others, instead of a blessing. It is their wisdom, as well as their duty, always to pray conditionally and submissively; for then they may be assured that their prayers will be benevolently and graciously answered.

7. If the conditional prayer of Moses was proper and acceptable to God, then the prayers of sinners are always sinful and unacceptable to God. For they never pray conditionally, but unconditionally. They are not willing to be denied on account of God's glory. It does not satisfy them to be told that God cannot grant their requests consistently with his own glory and the good of the universe. For his glory and the good of the universe do not appear so important as their own good; and they will not submit to be denied for such reasons. But if they will only ask for mercy, conditionally and submissively, they shall certainly find mercy.

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SERMON LXV.

THE HAPPINESS OF SELF DENIAL.

THEN Peter said, Lo we have left all and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time; and in the world to come, life everlasting.—LUKE, xviii. 28—30.

THERE was no duty that Christ more frequently and plainly inculcated, than that of self denial. He made it the cardinal condition of men's becoming his sincere followers. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." And when a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? "Jesus said unto him,—Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." And when he heard this he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God; For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time; and in the world to come, life everlasting." Mark expressly says that the self denying man, "shall receive an *hundred fold* now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life." The text fully warrants us in saying,

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That the exercise of self denial is productive of the highest happiness, both in this life and in the life to come.

I shall first explain self denial, and then show that it is productive of the highest present and future happiness.

I. Self denial is to be explained. Though it be universally allowed that there is such a thing as self denial, yet very different opinions are entertained concerning the nature of it, which makes it necessary to show in what it essentially consists.

In the first place, it does *not* consist in giving up one temporal and personal good for a greater temporal and personal good. For this is self gratifying instead of self denying. Any entirely selfish person would be willing to do this. Christ said to his hearers, "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again." Men are generally fond of exchanging a less personal and temporal good for a greater personal and temporal good. And though in some cases, they may feel a degree of reluctance in giving up a smaller for a greater temporal good, yet on the whole they choose to do it, to gratify their selfishness. One man will sacrifice his property to gratify his ambition, which he esteems a greater good. Another man will sacrifice his property to gratify his appetite, which he esteems a greater good. Another will sacrifice his property to gratify his revenge, which he esteems a greater good. But none of these persons, in these cases, exercise the least self denial. They only give up one personal and temporal interest for what they esteem a greater personal and temporal good, which gratifies their selfish and corrupt hearts.

Nor, secondly, does self denial consist in giving up a less temporal and personal good for a greater personal and *eternal* good. The most corrupt and selfish men in the world, are willing to give up any or all their temporal and personal interests for the sake of obtaining future and eternal happiness. Micah represents a sinner as expressing this willingness in the strongest terms: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" What this person is represented as being willing to do for the salvation of his soul, thousands and thousands of mankind have actually done, to obtain future and eternal happiness. All the idolatrous nations round about Judea, sacrificed their dear infants

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and children in order to obtain the favor of Moloch and their other false and cruel gods. The heathens in East India and the East India islands make the same cruel and inhuman sacrifices to their false gods and stupid idols. Some idolize the river Ganges, and sacrifice themselves and others to that idol. Thousands and thousands go as pilgrims, to sacrifice themselves to the grand idol Juggernaut. Some are voluntarily, and others involuntarily burnt to ashes, for their own or their friends' eternal benefit. The Mohammedans, who are semi-christians, go long pilgrimages to Mecca, and practice other self mortifications, for the sake of securing future and eternal happiness. And among those who call themselves christians, there are multitudes of hermits, monks and nuns, and other enthusiastic and superstitious persons, who voluntarily deny themselves the enjoyments of civil society, macerate their bodies, and subject themselves to the extremes of heat and cold, pain, poverty, and reproach, for the sake of obtaining the salvation of their souls. But there is not the least self denial in such selfish mortifications, sufferings and sacrifices. If a man should gain the whole world, and then give it up for the sake of escaping eternal misery, and obtaining eternal happiness, it would be the highest act of selfishness, instead of self denial; which does not consist in giving up a less temporal and personal good, for a greater temporal and personal good, nor in giving up a less personal and temporal good for a greater personal and eternal good. In a word, self denial does not consist in any thing that gratifies a selfish heart; and therefore it does not consist in giving up our own present good for our own future good, let our own future good be what it may.

But, thirdly and positively, self denial consists in giving up *our own good* for the *good of others*. The man who gives up the least personal good for the personal good of another, without any hope of reward, exercises true self denial. The man who gives up his private good for the good of the public, without any hope of reward, exercises true self denial. Such self denial stands in direct contrariety to selfishness. No man, who is entirely selfish, can be willing to give up his own good for the good of another person, or for the good of the public, or for the glory of God, without a hope of reward, or of receiving a greater good than he bestows. Satan knows there is no self denial, and consequently no virtue in selfishness, or in any action that flows from selfishness; and on that ground, he denied that Job had any self denial or virtue in his exercising love and obedience to God. "The Lord said unto Satan, hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord and said,

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Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Had Job loved and served God from mercenary motives, he would undoubtedly have felt, if not acted, as Satan predicted, when God stripped him at once of all his wealth and prosperity. But he blessed God in his sore afflictions and bereavements, which demonstrated his pure self denial and disinterested virtue. Christ, in the text, represents self denial as consisting in men's giving up private or personal good for the kingdom of God's sake. "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, parents, &c., for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." This self denial which Christ enjoined, he also practiced. So says Paul to the Corinthians. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Paul says to the Romans, "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good — for even Christ pleased not himself." And again, the apostle says, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth." According to the dictates of scripture, reason and conscience, all self denial consists in giving up our own good for the good of others, when our own personal and private good stands in competition with the good of others. We should never find any difficulty in understanding the nature and tendency of self denial, if we were only willing to practice it; and we should find no difficulty in practicing it, if we only possessed pure disinterested love to God and man. For,

II. True self denial is productive of the highest present and future happiness. Though this may look like a paradox, yet, I trust it will appear a plain and important truth, if we consider the following things.

1. The *nature* of true self denial. It consists, as we have seen, in giving up a less private or personal good for a greater public good; or in giving up our own good for the greater good of others. And this necessarily implies disinterested benevolence, which is placing our own happiness in the greater happiness of others. When a man gives up his own happiness to promote the greater happiness of another, he does it freely and voluntarily, because he takes more pleasure in the greater good of another, than in a less good of his own. So that though he gives up private and personal good, yet he does not give up all good, for

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he enjoys all that good of another, for which he gives up his own. And since that good of another is always greater than his own good, which he gives up for it, he becomes happier than he could be without such an act of self denial. The selfish man who loves his property more than his ease, enjoys more pleasure in laboring, sweating and toiling, than in spending his time in idleness and ease. So the benevolent man, who gives up his own personal good for the greater good of his neighbor, enjoys all that greater good of his neighbor, for which he gives up a less personal good of his own; and consequently he is happier than if he had not done that act of self denial. Or if a benevolent man gives up his private good to promote a greater public good, he enjoys all that greater public good, for which he gives up his private good; and of course becomes happier than if he had not given up his private, for the public good. Or if a benevolent man gives up his house, or his lands, or his children, or any thing that he calls his own, for the kingdom of God's sake, he enjoys that kingdom of God for which he gives up his personal good, and necessarily becomes happier than if he had not done that great act of self denial. We cannot conceive of any act of true self denial, which will not be productive of the present, as well as future good of the person who performs it. It is the dictate of every man's reason, that his giving up his own personal good for the good of others, or for the glory of God, will be productive of greater good in this life and in the life to come. Let a good man labor and suffer ever so much for the good of others, or the glory of God, the good of others and the glory of God will afford him a happiness which will overbalance all his painful labors and sufferings, and certainly be productive of a greater present and future happiness. If this be true, the benevolent must know it to be true, by their own experience. Let me ask you then, whether you ever enjoyed a purer or higher happiness than you have found in promoting the good of others and the glory of God, by acts of self denial?

2. Those who have denied themselves the most, have found the greatest happiness resulting from their self denial. God the Father denied himself in giving up his only begotten and dearly beloved Son, to suffer and die for this guilty and perishing world. But he always has been, and always will be, unspeakably more blessed by this astonishing act of self denial, than by any thing else he has ever done, or ever will do. The Lord Jesus Christ exercised greater self denial, than any other person in this world, by becoming incarnate, taking the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, for the salvation of the most guilty and ill deserving creatures. But he declares that he *delighted* to do his Father's will in suffering and dying, and was then and always will be

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more happy than if he had never suffered and died. And on this supposition, the apostle urges christians to imitate his example of self denial, as the way to become the most happy. "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Moses found the greatest happiness in a long series of self denying obedience and sufferings. It is expressly said, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect to the recompense of reward." Paul found self denial productive of happiness. He says, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. And ranking himself with christians, he says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." "But though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And again he says, after reciting a long catalogue of sufferings, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Now if God, if Christ, if Moses, if Paul, and if the primitive christians, found the greatest happiness in the greatest acts of self denial, it must be true that real self denial, in all instances, will produce the purest and greatest happiness in the minds of those who practice it, both in this life and in the life to come. Thus it appears from the nature of self denial, and from the effects which have flowed from it, that it is productive of the purest and highest happiness. And this will farther appear, if we consider,

3. The great and precious promises which are expressly made to self denial, by Christ himself. When he first sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel, he forewarned them to expect opposition, reproach and persecution in every form. But he enjoined it upon them to take up their cross, and to suffer every evil that they met with, *for his sake*, and promised to give them an ample reward for all their self denial in promoting his cause and kingdom. He said, "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it. — He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. — He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the

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name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Christ promised the amiable young man, whom he directed to sell all that he had and give to the poor, that if he would thus deny himself, take up the cross and follow him, he would abundantly reward him, by giving him treasure in heaven. But the young man thought this was too hard a condition of salvation, and therefore went away sorrowful. And the disciples thought so too. They were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? Christ told them that this was possible with God, though not with men. Then Peter said unto him, We have left all, and followed thee, wanting to know what reward *they* should receive for giving up all. "Jesus answered and said, Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." These same promises are made in the text, and in several other places, to those who exercise self denial, or give up all for Christ's sake, or the gospel's sake, or the kingdom of God's sake. And these promises assure every one who exercises true self denial, that he shall be an hundred fold more happy in this world as well as in the next, in time as well as in eternity, than if he did not thus deny himself, and give up all for the kingdom of God's sake. And it is easy to see from the nature of self denial, that these promises not only may be, but must be fulfilled. For self denial consists in giving up a personal good for a public good, and a present good for a future good. And those who give up their personal good for the good of others, enjoy all the good of others for which they give up their own; and those who give up their own good for the glory of God, enjoy all the glory of God for which they give up their own good; and of course, they must enjoy all the good of all other beings, so far as they are capable of it, which will be a hundred, yea a thousand fold greater good than their own personal good.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said in this discourse concerning self denial, that it is necessarily a term or condition of salvation. Christ was repeatedly asked what was the peculiar and necessary term or condition of becoming his disciple. And

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whenever this important question was put to him, he always replied that self denial was an indispensable condition. He uniformly said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This condition he more largely explained and illustrated in the fourteenth of Luke. When there went great multitudes with him, "he turned and said unto them, if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it, begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth, whether he be able with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." This condition of becoming a disciple of Christ is founded in that supreme and disinterested love to him, which disposes a man to love him more than father or mother, son or daughter, or even his own life; and which at the same time disposes him to hate father or mother, son or daughter, or even his own life, when either of these stand in the way of loving Christ supremely. Christ exercised just such supreme love to his Father, when "Peter began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee;" that is, that thou shouldest die on the cross. "But Christ turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Christ had a supreme and disinterested regard to the glory of God in dying on the cross, and therefore could hate Peter, or the best friend on earth, who stood in the way of his feeling and expressing supreme love to his Father, in suffering and dying on the cross. So Christ requires every person who would become his disciple, to love him supremely, and to give up or hate every person or object that stands in the way of his loving him supremely. Now such a supreme love to Christ is not only a proper, but a necessary and indispensable condition of becoming his disciple, and obtaining pardon and salvation. Salvation consists not only in freedom from future and eternal misery, but in the enjoyment of future and eternal happiness

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in heaven. But heavenly happiness is a social happiness, and consists in union and communion with God, with holy angels and the spirits of just men, made perfect in pure, disinterested love. All heaven is full of disinterested love and self denial. God has denied himself, Christ has denied himself, the Holy Spirit has denied himself, the holy angels have denied themselves, and all departed saints have denied themselves, and always will deny themselves, in giving up impenitent angels and impenitent men to eternal perdition. Without self denial, therefore, no man can see God, or see and enjoy the kingdom of God. Self denial is not a mere arbitrary condition of salvation, but the only possible condition of salvation. Men cannot be saved upon any lower or easier condition. They cannot embrace the gospel without it, and they cannot enjoy the salvation of the gospel without it.

2. It appears from what has been said in this discourse concerning self denial, that the doctrine cannot be carried too far. Though every one will allow that self denial is a scriptural doctrine, and ought to be preached, and that all ought to practice self denial, yet many imagine it may be, and sometimes is carried too far. But ought it not to be carried as far as Christ carried it? And can it be carried any farther than he carried it? He required men to deny themselves, and take up their cross, and give up not only little things, but great things; and not only some things, but all things. And lest he should be misunderstood, he mentions particulars. He mentions houses and lands, which include every species of property. He mentions fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and children, which include the nearest and dearest connections and friends. And to all these sacrifices he adds the sacrifice of life itself. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The life here spoken of as lost and as found, is not mere temporal, but eternal life. What preacher ever taught self denial in a plainer or more extensive sense than Christ did? Or what preacher can carry the doctrine farther, or to a higher degree than he did? He makes self denial in the highest sense and in the highest degree, an indispensable condition of salvation to every person in the world, whether rich or poor, high or low, bond or free, learned or unlearned. Though few presume to complain of Christ for preaching the doctrine of self denial too plainly and extensively, yet many complain of ministers for preaching the doctrine as plainly and extensively as he did. They say this doctrine is strong meat, too strong for common people to hear, understand, believe and love.

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Indeed, many are ready to cry out with those who heard Christ preach this doctrine to the amiable young man, "Who then can be saved?" They say it amounts to *unconditional submission*, or a *willingness* to be cast off for ever. And this is undoubtedly true. But what if it does amount to this, shall it not be preached? Shall not the only condition of salvation which Christ has proposed, be preached? Can the gospel be really preached to sinners so that they can understand it, unless this doctrine be preached? Shall ministers presume to alter, or bring down the condition of salvation? Or if they do bring down the condition of salvation, and men comply with their condition thus modified, will it prepare them for heaven, or will Christ admit them there? I now ask, what shall ministers do, or what shall I do, in preaching the gospel? The doctrine of self denial as Christ preached it, is disbelieved, denied, opposed and even ridiculed, by nine in ten, if not by ninety-nine in a hundred, from Maine to Georgia; and not only by the men of the world, but by christians and christian ministers. The question returns, what ought ministers to do? or what must they do, in respect to preaching the doctrine of self denial? Shall they wholly omit it? or shall they preach it obscurely? or shall they preach it plainly and fully, as Christ did? They must take up their cross and preach it; and a heavy cross it is. But heavy as it is, it is light compared with what must be endured by those who are unwilling to bear it.

3. If Christianity requires men to exercise true self denial, then the christian religion is not a gloomy, but a joyful religion. It affords a hundred fold more happiness than any other religion can afford. Those who embrace Christianity in the spirit of self denial, give up their own good for the good of others, and for the glory of God, and thereby put themselves into the enjoyment of all the good for which they give up their own private, personal good, which is a hundred and a thousand fold greater than any private, personal and selfish good can be. This is not only theoretically, but practically and experimentally true. All who have embraced the gospel in the spirit of self denial, have always been the happiest men in the world. Abel was happier than Cain, Enoch was happier than Nimrod, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, and all the primitive christians, were a hundred fold happier than the unbelieving world among whom they lived. Christians now are far more happy in the continual exercise of self denial, than sinners in their highest state of prosperity. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. While they keep their hearts in the love of God and man, and place their happiness in the happiness of others, and in the glory of God, they rejoice always, and enjoy

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all the good that comes to their knowledge. They enjoy the houses, and lands, and prosperity of the men of the world. They enjoy the temporal and spiritual happiness of their fellow christians, and they enjoy the kingdom of God and all the blessings contained in it. They enjoy all the good they see in this world at present, and all the good of the world to come, in a lively hope and prospect. God has filled this world with his goodness, and those who have given up their own good for the good of others, enjoy all the goodness he has displayed towards themselves and others. They experimentally know the truth of Christ's declaration and promise, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold *now in this time*, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands—and in the world to come, eternal life." So long as christians keep themselves in the faith and love of God, and give themselves and all they have to him, though having nothing, they possess, or enjoy, all things. They have more reason to rejoice, and do actually rejoice more than any other men in the world. Their path is not dark and gloomy, but like the rising sun shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

4. It appears from the nature of that self denial which the gospel requires, that the more sinners become acquainted with the gospel, the more they are disposed to hate it and reject it. All sinners are lovers of their own selves, and regard their own good supremely and solely, and the good of others only so far as it tends to promote their own private, personal and selfish good. But the gospel requires them to deny themselves, and give up all their private, personal, separate good, for the good of others, and for the kingdom of God's sake; and this is diametrically opposite to their selfish hearts; it is a hard saying, they cannot bear to hear it. The whole gospel is a scheme of self denial, and therefore the whole gospel is perfectly disagreeable to the hearts of sinners, when they clearly understand it. There are many, however, that believe, maintain and teach, that sinners would love and cordially embrace the gospel, if they only understood it, and that nothing but ignorance prevents their embracing it. But this is contrary to scripture, reason and fact. Christ said to sinners, "Ye have both *seen* and *hated* both me and my Father." It is contrary to reason to suppose that sinners who are entirely selfish, should love the gospel, which requires them to give up all they have to embrace it. And it is contrary to fact. The more sinners know the gospel, the more unwilling they are to embrace it. The experiment has been made. The plainer Christ preached the gospel, and the more they understood it, the more they hated and opposed both him

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and the gospel. The plainer the apostles preached the gospel to sinners, the more they hated and opposed it. And the plainer the gospel is preached at this day, the more the carnal mind of sinners is awakened, and rises in opposition to it. It is found by experience, that it is impossible to preach the gospel plainly and intelligibly to sinners *so as to please them.* The offence of the cross has not ceased. Self denial cannot be truly explained and exhibited, so as to become pleasing to any selfish heart.

5. It appears from the nature of that self denial which the gospel requires, why sinners are more willing to embrace any false scheme of religion than the true. We find sinners of all descriptions more willing to embrace Arianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, Antinomianism, and Universalism, than the plain truths of the gospel; and the reason is obvious. The gospel requires self denial, but no false scheme of religion does. Every false scheme of religion teaches men that they may and can go to heaven, without self denial, or without giving up all they have for the kingdom of God's sake, or without unconditional submission, or without being willing that God should dispose of them for time and eternity, according as it shall be most for his own glory. No Arian, no Socinian, no Arminian, no Antinomian, no Universalist, ever preaches gospel self denial, or any doctrine which flows from it. And all these preachers will tell their hearers that the gospel doctrine of self denial is false and absurd, and ought never to be preached, or believed, or practiced. And this is highly pleasing to every unrenewed, unsanctified and unholy heart. This will account for all the success which false teachers have had, in every age, and in every part of the world. They have left out of the gospel all that is displeasing to sinners, and preached all in the gospel which is pleasing to them. All men desire salvation, and are highly pleased to be told that they may have salvation, and retain all their selfish desires, and hopes, and enjoyments. But this is preaching another gospel than that which Christ and the apostles preached, and will deprive those who embrace it of all the good which the gospel of Christ promises, and subject them to all the evils that it threatens. It most seriously concerns every one to shun and avoid those who would pervert the gospel of Christ, and lead them in the broad and smooth road to ruin. Christ forewarns men to beware of false teachers, who are wolves in sheep's clothing, and declares, that if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch, and perish. It is only through the strait and narrow gate of self denial, that any can enter into the kingdom of heaven. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.

6. It appears from the nature of that self denial which the

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gospel requires, that sinners have no excuse for not embracing the gospel. The only excuse they make is, that they are unable, that they cannot embrace it. But there is nothing in the way of their embracing the gospel, except that self denial which it requires. And it requires self denial only because it is absolutely necessary in order to be completely happy, both in this world and in the next. It is entirely reasonable that they should deny themselves, and place their happiness in the happiness of others, and in the glory of God; which will make them a hundred fold more happy than they can be while they enjoy only a private, separate and selfish good. They have no excuse, therefore, for retaining their selfishness another moment. It is their immediate duty to forsake all for Christ's and the gospel's sake. The apostles did, Zaccheus did, and thousands did in Christ's and the apostles' days, and millions since. Christ now commands you to take up your cross and follow him, and promises to reward you a hundred fold both in time and in eternity. It is much easier to be benevolent than selfish. There is far more pleasure in seeking the things of Christ, than your own things. There is far more happiness in being united with his friends, than in being united with his enemies, who are enemies to you, as well as to him. It is impossible for you to be united to his enemies, because they cannot be united to you, or to one another. Selfishness is a repulsive principle, and forbids union. Be entreated then to renounce it, and become united to Christ, to God, and to all holy beings, and you shall receive a hundred fold more happiness in this time, and in time to come, for ever. The good which you have always been seeking, but which you have never found, you shall immediately find by coming to Christ, taking up your cross, and following him. If you do not give up all that you have, all that you have will be taken from you. This is your only alternative. Choose you this day, whether you will seek to save your life, and lose it; or voluntarily lose your life, that you may find it.

Finally, if men must give up all they have to be christians, then it is a *great thing* to be a christian. He is essentially different from every sinner in the world. He exercises that pure, disinterested love, that no sinner is willing to exercise, even to obtain eternal life. He is more amiable, more excellent, more worthy of the love of God and man, than any totally selfish creature in the universe. He now enjoys, and will for ever enjoy, more happiness than any selfish heart can feel. He has the witness in himself that he belongs to Christ, and is a joint heir with him to all the blessedness of the heavenly world. Who, then, must not wish to be a christian? Who, that is one, cannot know it? And who that is not, cannot but know it?

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SERMON LXVI.

CONTENTMENT.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. — 1 Timothy, vi. 6.

Since God orders all the circumstances of human life, every person ought to be entirely satisfied with that state and situation in which he is placed. One person has no more reason to complain of his condition than another. This the apostle directed Timothy to teach others. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters let them not despise them because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions which are unprofitable." And then he adds, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." The apostle here directs Timothy to teach all men to be religious in order to be contented, and to be contented in order to be happy in any situation in which God places them; whether as masters, or servants, whether in the most eligible, or least eligible, circumstances of life. This is the connection of the text, and in treating upon it, I shall,

I. Explain godliness;

II. Show that godliness will produce contentment; and,

III. Show that godliness with contentment is great gain.

I. I am to explain godliness. This consists in two things.

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1. It consists in a godly heart. Godly signifies godlike. Those who have a heart after God's own heart are godly, and bear his moral image, in which man was at first created, and to which every renewed person is restored by the special influence of the divine Spirit. The Spirit in regeneration enstamps the moral image of God upon the heart, which consists in righteousness and true holiness. There is nothing in which men so nearly resemble God, as in a godly heart. This transforms them into the divine likeness, and makes them holy as God is holy, and perfect as God is perfect. Godliness comprises every species of holy affections, as ungodliness comprises every species of sinful affections. Godliness is the essence of all vital piety, and contains every thing that belongs to experimental religion. Besides,

2. Godliness implies not only a godly heart, but a godly life. All men will live according to their hearts. Those who have a godly heart, will live in a godly manner; which implies,

1. A sincere consecration of themselves to God. Those who mean to live a godly life, give themselves away to God in an everlasting covenant, never to be forgotten. They consecrate their time, their talents, their property, and all their influence to his service. They resolve to live to him, and not to themselves. They sincerely aim to do every thing to his glory. Whether they are rich or poor, whether they are rulers or subjects, whether they are bond or free, they mean to be the servants of God, and to seek the interests of his kingdom, above every other interest. They mean to acknowledge him in all their ways, and look to him to guide all their steps, and supply all their wants. These have been the inward views and feelings of all who have lived a godly life, in every age and part of the world. Nor is this all; for

2. The godly not only devote themselves to God, but pay a sincere and habitual obedience to the intimations of his will. They delight in the law of the Lord after the inner man. Abraham was all obedience to the divine commands. He went wherever God directed him to go, and gave up whatever God commanded him to give up. Moses was equally obsequious to the will of God, under the most self-denying circumstances. All who possess a godly heart are willing to express it, in all the various ways which God requires. They esteem his precepts concerning all things to be right, and find a peculiar pleasure in obeying his voice. If they are rich, they mean to obey the commands given to the rich. If they are poor, they mean to obey the commands given to the poor. If they are rulers, they mean to obey the commands given to rulers. If they are subjects, they mean to obey the commands given to

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subjects. If they are teachers, they mean to obey the commands given to teachers. If they are hearers, they mean to obey the commands given to hearers. If they are masters, they mean to obey the commands given to masters. If they are servants, they mean to obey the commands given to servants. If they are in prosperity, they mean to obey the commands given to the prosperous. If they are in adversity, they mean to obey the commands given to the afflicted. If they are aged, they mean to obey the commands given to the aged. Or if they are young, they mean to obey the commands given to the young. They mean to walk with God in the way of his commands, and to avoid every evil and false way. They habitually aim to be both internally and externally conformed to the character, the will, and commands of God. I now proceed to show,

II. That this godliness will produce contentment. This is plainly suggested in the text. "But godliness with contentment is great gain." The connection here is that of cause and effect. Godliness naturally leads men to be contented in every condition of life. This Paul knew to be true, by his own happy experience. He says, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." His godliness taught him this rare and useful lesson. Now, it will appear from various considerations, that contentment naturally flows from godliness. For,

1. Godliness leads those who possess it to realize that God always treats them as well as they deserve. They live under an habitual sense of their unworthiness in the sight of God. They realize that they have forfeited all good, and have deserved all evil, at the hands of their Creator and Benefactor. They are ready to say to God, as Jacob did, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant." And they can heartily adopt the language of the prophet. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." The godly always feel their unworthiness, which naturally creates contentment in their present condition, whether they are in prosperity or adversity. Under the deepest afflictions, they are disposed to say with the prophet, "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" And again, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause." So far as godliness tends to produce a sense of unworthiness, just so far it tends to create contentment with all the allotments of providence.

2. The godly are sensible that God always treats them according to their prayers, which reconciles them to the divine dispensations towards them. They give themselves to prayer,

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and in their prayers they desire God to give, or to deny, or to take away favors, according to his own pleasure. They know not what is best, and cheerfully leave it to God to do what he knows to be best. They desire to submit their understandings to his understanding, and their wills to his will. They know, therefore, that he gives what they desire he should give, that he denies what they desire he should deny, and that he takes away what they desire he should take away. He treats them exactly according to their desires in their most serious and devout moments; which cannot fail to give them satisfaction. This gave Job satisfaction when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." This gave satisfaction to David, when he said, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." This disposed the primitive christians to say, "As dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." A godly spirit disposes the godly to choose that God would give or deny them favors, and order all their external circumstances as he sees best; and when he has given, or withholden, or taken away, they know he has done his own pleasure, which is what, in their most fervent prayers, they desired him to do. His will being known, affords them true satisfaction and contentment. For it was their heart's desire, and prayer to God, that his will, and not theirs, might be done. Godliness carries in its own nature, contentment under all the dispensations of divine providence. And this will farther appear, if we consider,

3. That it leads men to live by faith in the perfect wisdom and rectitude of the divine government. The godly believe that the hand and heart of God are concerned in all the events which actually take place. They believe that there is no good and no evil in the world which God has not, for wise and good reasons, determined should exist. They believe that God always treats them, and all other men, as well as infinite wisdom and goodness can treat them. They believe that he never sends any evil, nor denies any favor, but when his own glory and the best interests of the universe require it. They believe his own declaration, that "he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." They believe that "he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works;" and that he will make "all things work together for good to them that love him." And while they exercise this holy and godly faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, they cannot distrust the care and faithfulness of God, nor feel discontented with their present, nor anxious about their future condition. While they thus

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stay themselves upon God, and confide in his wisdom and rectitude, they are in perfect peace. They must be satisfied, while they realize that God gives them as many and as great favors, and inflicts as few and as light evils, as he can possibly do, consistently with his unerring wisdom and perfect goodness. They cannot wish to be treated better than a perfectly wise and good being can treat them. Instead of murmuring and repining under his frowns, they are disposed to admire and praise him for his astonishing goodness and mercy. Hear the godly and gracious language of David, notwithstanding all the evils he suffered: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Such ample and joyful contentment naturally flows from genuine godliness. It only remains to show,

III. That godly contentment will produce great gain; or rather, that godliness with contentment is great gain. Or, as the apostle says in another passage in this epistle, "Godliness is *profitable* unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." This leads me to say,

1. That godly contentment gains all the good in this world. Those who are contented after a godly sort, enjoy all the things that they possess, and they actually possess as much as they desire to possess; which affords them complete contentment. The contented person is in just such a situation as he, all things considered, desires to be in. So that he actually enjoys all the personal good bestowed upon him; and this is all the good that he at present desires. And being contented with his own lot, he becomes contented with the lot of all mankind. He is godly, and feels as God does towards all the human race. God is perfectly satisfied, or (if I may use the term) contented, with the state and circumstances of the whole family of man. Every person enjoys just as much good, and suffers just as much evil, as God sees best he should enjoy and suffer. He constantly sees all men in the very circumstances most pleasing to him, and would not have a single circumstance altered, for the time being, with respect to any creature, person or event on earth. Just so, the godly person who is contented with his own state, is equally contented with the state and circumstances of all mankind, so far as his knowledge extends. And this contentment necessarily puts him into the possession of all the good he sees and knows to exist in the world. He actually enjoys the whole. He gains all the good, which he sees bestowed upon himself, and upon his fellow creatures. This ex-

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plains Christ's paradoxical declaration to Peter. "Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered, and said, verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this life, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." The plain import of these declarations is, that godliness or true benevolence disposes men to be contented with, and to enjoy, not only all the personal good that falls to their lot, but to be contented with, and to enjoy all the good which they see fall to the lot of all their fellow creatures. Those who are godly and contented, do really gain all the good there is in this world, so far as it is possible they should gain it, or enjoy it. Those who live in the exercise of godly contentment, cannot desire that God should make the least alteration in the mode of treating the whole human race. And as they pass over the world, they are satisfied and contented with their own state, as connected with the state of all their fellow men. They behold the world now, as God did at first, and say it is all very good. Nothing can be added to it, or taken from it, or altered in it, to make it any better. Thus godly contentment gives them the enjoyment, though not the possession, of the whole world. But to enjoy the whole world is much better than to possess it; and is really to gain it, in the highest and best sense of the word. I may observe again,

2. That those who possess godly contentment, gain not only this world, but the world to come. As they are contented and satisfied with all things as they are in the present world, so they will be equally contented and satisfied with all things as they are in a future world. God is pleased with all things in eternity. He sees every creature and every object there, in that situation which gives him complete satisfaction and self enjoyment. He constantly enjoys all the good that all his holy creatures enjoy, and that in connection with all the evil that his unholy creatures suffer. He sees nothing amiss in eternity, but beholds all things in the situation in which he pleased to place them, with infinite delight and satisfaction. Just so, the godly in the exercise of godly contentment, are prepared to enjoy all the good in eternity, so far as they now see or expect it, and so far as others see or expect it. Contentment here, prepares them for contentment there. Godliness here, prepares them to enjoy godliness there. And as they enjoy their own good and the good of others here, so they now enjoy their own good and the good of others laid up for them there. Godliness gains every thing in

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this world and in the world to come; in this world contentment, and in the world to come eternal life. Accordingly, the apostle represents the godly as actually possessing this rich, durable, double gain. For he says of them, "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours." Now it must be *great gain* indeed, to gain not only all the good there is in this world, but all the good there is in the world to come. Godliness is as profitable, as it is possible any thing should be. It will gain all the good in the universe. In its final issue, it will make all the godly as happy as their finite and limited capacities will permit. This not only may be, but must be, according to the nature of godliness and the express declarations of God himself. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor any human heart conceived, the full and final gain of godliness.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If godliness produces contentment, then those have reason to doubt of the sincerity of their religion, who do not derive contentment from it. Among the professors of godliness, some are more godly than others, and consequently derive more contentment from their godliness than others; but all who are really godly, derive some sensible satisfaction and contentment from it. Those, therefore, who do not derive any satisfaction or contentment from their professed godliness, have reason to fear that they never have experienced the grace of God in truth. The want of the effect argues the want of the cause. Godliness has a natural tendency to produce contentment, and the scripture represents the godly as deriving this happy effect from their godliness. The sincere piety of David produced this effect. "There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." His piety produced that peace and contentment which the world cannot give. And he says to God again, "Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." And this peace and quietness he says he derived from his filial piety. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother. My soul is even as a weaned child." Solomon says, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." And he asserts that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." The connection between godliness and contentment is so intimate and inseparable, that none

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have reason to think that they possess the one, if they do not enjoy the other. Godliness is the same in every person who possesses it, and always produces the same effect, though in different degrees. It cannot be supposed that any possess real godliness, and yet never derive real contentment from it. The gain of godliness greatly consists in contentment, when all other things fail of affording it. A false hope, derived from a false religion, may yield a certain kind of satisfaction in days of prosperity; but it is only real godliness that can afford solid peace and contentment in days of adversity. It is then the godly find the gain of godliness, and those who do not find this happy effect of their religion, when it is brought to the test, have reason to fear that the love of God has never been shed abroad in their hearts. Job said of God, "Though he slay me, I will trust in him." Paul's godliness taught him to be content in whatever state he was placed. The professed godliness which does not produce contentment, is real ungodliness.

2. If godliness produces contentment, then none can be contented who are destitute of godliness. It is the exclusive nature and tendency of godliness to produce contentment, and therefore we are constrained to conclude that contentment cannot be derived from any other source. It is the scripture character of the ungodly that they are always discontented. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "They are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." God himself cannot (to speak with reverence) make them contented. This has been demonstrated in the course of providence, for nearly six thousand years. God has filled the earth with his goodness, and granted the largest portion of good things to the ungodly. The prosperity of the wicked has been a stumbling block to the righteous. Job could not account for it, that "the tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly." David could not account for "the prosperity of the wicked, who are not in trouble as other men; neither are plagued as other men," and "whose eyes stand out with fatness, and who have more than heart could wish." God has poured the blessings of his providence into the bosoms of the ungodly, in the largest profusion. But none of these things could ever make them contented. The more he has given them, the more they have wanted, and the less they have been satisfied. Though he has given silver to those who have loved silver, yet they have never been satisfied with silver. Though he has given abundance to those who love abundance, yet they have never been satisfied with increase. Though he has clothed some with silk and purple, raised them to royal

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dignity, and put crowns of gold and diamonds on their heads, yet they have never been satisfied with their elevated stations. It appears from the experience of ages, that it is impossible to satisfy the desires of the ungodly. Their desires are selfish desires, and these are so unlimited and discordant, that they never can be satisfied. All who are in the state of nature, and destitute of real godliness, know by their own experience, that they never have found true contentment in any situation in which they have been placed, nor in the possession of any worldly good. They may have restrained their hopes and expectations from the world, but they have never given up their worldly desires. These continue to disturb their peace, and prevent all true contentment. The whole world of the ungodly are continually murmuring and repining under all the great and innumerable external favors and blessings, that God is constantly pouring down upon them in his providence.

3. If godliness be so gainful as we have heard, then none can be godly too soon. Almost all who enjoy religious instructions, whether private or public, or both, seriously intend to become godly before they die and go into eternity. They know that as they brought nothing into the world, so they can carry nothing out of it. They know that the fashion of this world passes away, and they are passing away with it. And they know enough about their future state to be convinced that they must become godly in order to be happy there. But they imagine that they can be much more happy here, without godliness than with it. They imagine that godliness will be a great *loss*, instead of great gain, while they are in health and prosperity. So the child thinks. So the youth thinks. So the man of the world thinks. And so every sinner thinks. They hope to gain instead of losing, by living without God in the world, as long as they can with safety. But this is a most egregious mistake, if godliness be profitable unto all things, and gains the happiness of both this world, and of the world to come. And this is certainly true, if godliness produces real contentment, which the enjoyments of the world never did, and never can produce. Contentment is the supreme and ultimate end which all the ungodly are seeking and hoping to find in the things of the world; but if they should gain the whole world, the whole world could not give them contentment. Those who have obtained the most wealth, the most power, the most magnificence and affluence, have told us from their own experience, that these things, instead of yielding true contentment, are a fruitful source of disappointment and vexation of spirit. This is agreeable to the experience of all the ungodly. Ask any ungodly man whether he has ever found contentment, and he will answer no. But ask any godly person,

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rich or poor, high or low, whether he has ever found contentment, and he will answer that he has found it in the enjoyment of God, and not in the things of the world. If we may give credit to the testimony of both the godly and ungodly, we must believe that godliness is the only source of contentment, and that none can become godly too soon for their own present as well as future happiness. As soon as they become godly, and reconciled to the character and government of God, they will find the treasure hidden in the field, and the pearl of great price, which will make them both rich and happy. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

4. If godliness be so gainful as we have heard; then there is no danger of being too godly. The men of the world often complain of the children of light, for being too godly, and paying too much regard to the glory of God, and the interests of his kingdom. They imagine they spend too much time in religious services, expose themselves too much in attending public worship at all seasons, and deny themselves too much for the promotion of the cause of Christ. They imagine they waste their health and their time, and really injure their interests, by giving God too much of their hearts and lives. They think they rather lose, than gain, by being too godly. But wisdom is justified of her children. The godly are the only men who display true wisdom, in their views, and feelings, and conduct. And the more godly any are, the more practical wisdom they exhibit before the eyes of the unwise and ungodly world. Though the godly may sometimes feel and express a zeal which is not according to knowledge, and which they have reason to regret, yet no godly person ever regretted being too godly. When pious persons review their conduct at the end of a day, or at the end of a year, or especially at the end of life, they always regret their barrenness and unfruitfulness in the service of God, and lament their having had too little, and not too much religion. And they certainly have reason to lament this, if godliness be great gain. Were Abraham, or Moses, or Job, or Paul, too godly? Were the friends and followers of Christ, when he was on earth, too godly? Have any christians since, been too godly? Or have they ever regretted having too much godly contentment, whether in prosperity or adversity? So far from this, all christians have lamented their great proneness to murmur and complain, both in prosperity and adversity, which has been owing to their want of godly contentment.

5. If godliness be so gainful as has been represented, then the

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godly have good reason to pity the ungodly. They have always been unhappy and miserable objects; for they have always been disappointed respecting that contentment which has been the supreme and ultimate object of all their worldly pursuits. Though they have often obtained the things which they desired, and which they expected would afford them contentment, yet they have always found that they produced a contrary effect, and blasted their hopes and expectations. All that cometh is vanity; the world will, in time to come, as in time past, deceive and disappoint them. They are pursuing a course which will disappoint one hope after another, until it plunges them in utter despair, which is the perfection of misery. Such persons are really to be pitied, though they may view themselves as rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing. The godly see their misery, and guilt, and danger, and ought to pity them. David condemns himself for being envious at the prosperity of the wicked. Good men ought to guard against such unwise, as well as sinful feelings. And as soon as they view their end, they will feel as David did, and pity their forlorn condition, when they shall lose the world and their souls with it. Lazarus had reason to pity Dives, while living in all his wealth and affluence. Every godly man has reason to pity the ungodly, though having more than heart can wish; for he sees his present discontentment, and foresees his future disappointment and despair, if he persists in his ungodliness.

6. If godliness be so gainful as has been represented, then the godly ought to do all they can to lead others to be godly. Godliness is benevolence, and benevolence wishes well to all mankind. God is good to the evil, and the godly are good to the ungodly. And though they may express their goodness to them, by promoting their temporal happiness, yet they can give a much stronger expression of their benevolence towards them, by promoting their piety and godly contentment. It is true, parents ought to provide for their children; but they cannot promote their present and future good in any other way so much, as in a faithful discharge of parental duty towards them. They can do nothing better for them than to teach them, by example, godly contentment, godly obedience and godly zeal, for their spiritual and eternal good. These are powerful means to impress the minds of the young with a sense of the importance and benefit of early piety. And these are the best means that the godly can use, to lead all the ungodly to give up their lying vanities, choose the one thing needful, and prepare for both living and dying.

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PART XVIII.

PRAYER.

SERMONS LXVII.—LXVIII.

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SERMON LXVII.

THE PROPER DESIGN AND INFLUENCE OF PRAYER.

For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. Genesis, xxxii. 28.

Though all christians agree in maintaining the duty of prayer, yet many find a difficulty in reconciling this duty with the divine character. They suppose God is perfectly good, infinitely wise, and absolutely immutable in all his purposes; and upon this ground, they cannot easily conceive what influence prayer can have, either to procure his favors, or to avert his frowns. It is the design of the ensuing discourse, therefore, to remove this difficulty, by pointing out the nature and tendency of prayer. And the words I have read, taken in their proper connection, directly lead us to the consideration of this serious and practical subject.

As Jacob was returning from Padan-Aram to his native country, he sent messengers to his brother Esau, to acquaint him with his intended visit, and to conciliate his favor. But the messengers brought back information, that his brother was on his way to meet him, with four hundred men. This news was extremely alarming to Jacob, who knew his brother's resentment, and his own weakness. In this critical situation, he acted the part of a pious and prudent man. He first attempted to appease his brother's wrath, by a noble and princely present. But lest this precaution should fail of success, he ordered his servants to conduct his family and flocks over the brook Jabbok, whilst he himself remained alone, to supplicate the divine favor and protection. At this season of solitude and devotion, he wrestled with God and prevailed. The

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account is extremely solemn and instructive. "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh; and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Here it is very evident that Jacob wrestled with a divine person; and that his wrestling principally or wholly consisted in pleading and crying for mercy. So we find it represented by the prophet Hosea. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him." The sincerity, fervency, and importunity of his prayers, moved God to hear and answer his requests. Both the letter and spirit of the text suggest this general observation:

That it is the design of prayer to move God to bestow mercy.

This will appear, if we consider,

1. That prayer properly and essentially consists in pleading. Though it may be divided into distinct parts or branches, yet all these ultimately unite and centre in supplication. In adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving, we ultimately plead for divine mercy. When we petition our fellow men, we always mean to move them to grant our requests. And in order to prevail, it is common to make use of various modes of supplication or pleading. This is the method which a penitent child would take, to obtain the forfeited favor of his father. He would acknowledge the rectitude of his father's government; he would confess the injury he had done to his father's character; he would thank him for his past favors, and pathetically plead for his forgiving love. He would naturally employ all these modes of address, in order to move his father to pardon his faults. So when we praise God for his perfections, thank him for his mercies, confess our trespasses against him, and present our petitions to him, we do all this with an ultimate aim to move his heart, and obtain the blessings we implore. Indeed, we never supplicate any being, without an ultimate intention of prevailing upon him to do or grant what we desire. And any address which does not express or imply a design of moving the person addressed, cannot deserve the name of petition or prayer. So far, therefore, as prayer signifies "the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his

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will," just so far it necessarily implies our design and desire of moving God to bestow the favors we request. There are no two words in our language more nearly synonymous, than praying and pleading. And since, praying always implies pleading, it must necessarily imply a desire and design of moving God to show mercy.

2. It appears from the prayers of good men, which are recorded in scripture, that they meant to move God to grant their petitions. Abraham's intercession for Sodom carries this idea. He earnestly desired and prayed that God would graciously spare that degenerate city. And he was so fervent and importunate in his addresses to the Deity, that he apologized for his importunity. "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak." And he continued to apologize, until he made his last and smallest request. "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once." Such great importunity in prayer plainly supposes that Abraham meant to move the Supreme Being to spare those guilty creatures for whom he entreated. Jacob wrestled all night with God in prayer, and humbly, though confidently, said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." We must conclude from this that he meant to move God to grant him a blessing. Job had the same design in praying to God. "Oh!" said he, "that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my speech before him, and fill my mouth with arguments." And what a variety of arguments did Daniel use, to prevail upon God to grant pardon and deliverance to his covenant people! He prayed in this fervent and importunate strain: "Now, therefore, O my God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake; O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name; for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thy name's sake, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." Why should Daniel use so many arguments with God, and plead with so much fervor and importunity, unless he desired and intended to move his compassion towards his people, and incline him to work their deliverance? No men ever understood the nature and design of prayer better than Abraham, Job, and Daniel. And since these eminent saints evidently meant, by their fervent and importunate supplications, to move God to show mercy, we may justly conclude this to be a proper end to be proposed in praying. Indeed, it is much to be doubted whether any good

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men ever did call upon God with freedom and fervency, without an ardent desire of moving God to grant their requests. This is so essential to prayer, that no pious person, perhaps, would know how to order his speech before God, if this were to be excluded from his petitions. And, though some good men may think that they ought not to indulge a desire of moving God to show mercy, yet we believe, if they would examine their own feelings, they would find that they never have been able to pray in sincerity, without indulging and expressing such a reasonable desire.

3. The friends of God are urged to pray with fervency and importunity, in order to move the divine compassion. This seems to be the spirit of the prophet's exhortation to the saints in his day: "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and *give him no rest*, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." God is pleased to represent himself as greatly influenced, by the prayers of good men. To them he says, "Concerning my sons, and concerning my daughters, *command* ye me." Again he says, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this people." And he conveys the same idea in stronger terms still. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only themselves." These modes of expression clearly and forcibly imply the prevailing influence of prayer upon the heart of the Deity. Christ likewise illustrates and inculcates the energy of prayer, by the parable of the unjust judge and importunate widow. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them speedily." The plain and obvious design of this parable is, to represent the powerful influence of pious and persevering prayer, to move God to pity and relieve his friends in distress. And agreeably to this, the apostle James expressly declares that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Indeed, the whole tenor of scripture encourages saints to call upon God, with desires and hopes of moving his compassion. It is still farther to be observed,

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4. That the prayers of good men have actually prevailed upon God to grant great and signal favors. When the children of Israel had made a molten image, God was highly displeased, and felt disposed to destroy them. But Moses prayed, and his prayers prevailed upon God to spare the idolaters. This appears from the account which Moses gives of that memorable event. "And the Lord said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. Farthermore the Lord spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff necked people: Let me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they. So I turned and came down from the mount — And I fell down before the Lord, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you. But the Lord *hearkened unto me at that time also.*" It is here plainly intimated that the prayers of Moses, once and again, moved God to bestow great and undeserved favors. The prayer of Joshua moved God to stop the course of nature, and cause the sun and moon to stand still, while he completed his victory over the enemies of Israel. The prayers of Job moved God to forgive the folly and presumption of his three friends, who had reproached both him and his Maker. David prevailed upon God, by his humble and fervent prayer, to countermand the angel, who stood with a drawn sword over Jerusalem, to destroy it. Samuel often interceded and prevailed with God, to spare and bless his rebellious people. Though Elijah was an imperfectly righteous man, yet his effectual fervent prayers availed much, to bring and to remove divine judgments. The apostle gives this account of the man, and of his prayers. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." It was the well known influence of Elijah's prayers, in moving God to smile or frown upon his people, that extorted the significant and pathetic exclamation of Elisha, when he saw him gloriously ascending to heaven. "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" We have another instance of the prevail-

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ing influence of prayer, in the conduct of the primitive christians. While Peter was in prison, the church prayed incessantly for him, and at length prevailed. For in answer to their prayers, God miraculously loosed his bands, and set him at liberty. These effects of prayer, in connection with the other considerations which have been suggested, afford sufficient evidence, that it is the design of prayer to move God to bestow favors.

But now some may be ready to ask, How can this be? How can prayer have the least influence to move the heart of God, who is of one mind, and with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning?

Here we ought to consider, in the first place, that the prayers of good men are proper reasons why an infinitely wise and good Being should grant their requests. The entreaties and tears of Joseph were proper reasons why his brethren should have spared him from the pit; and they were finally constrained to acknowledge the force of those reasons. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear." The cries of the poor and needy are proper reasons why we should grant them relief. And the ardent desires of a dutiful child are proper reasons why the parent should gratify his feelings. So, the sincere and humble prayers of the upright are proper reasons why the great Parent of all should show them favor. Hence says the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." When a saint sincerely offers up his desires to God for a certain favor, God views his prayer as a reason why he should grant his request. And when a number of saints unite in praying for any public blessing, God views their united petitions as so many reasons why he should grant it. It is true, indeed, God does not always answer the prayers of his friends, because he often sees stronger reasons for denying, than for granting their requests. His perfect benevolence is under the direction of his unerring wisdom, which always leads him to act according to the highest reason. So far, therefore, as the prayers of his people are consistent with the general good, just so far they are always a powerful and prevailing reason, for the bestowing of divine favors.

We ought to consider, in the next place, that though God formed all his purposes from eternity, yet he formed them in the view of all the pious petitions which should ever be presented to him, and gave to these petitions all the weight that they deserved, in fixing his determinations. In determining to forgive the idolatry of Israel, he had respect to the request of Moses.

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In determining to cause the sun and moon to stand still, he had respect to the petition of Joshua. In determining to release Peter from prison, he had respect to the pressing importunity of the church. Indeed, all his purposes, which relate to the bestowment of solicited favors, were formed in view, and under the influence of those prayers which he intended to answer. He adapted preventing, preserving, delivering mercies to the prayers of his people, and fixed a connection between their prayers, and his special interpositions.

This leads us, in the last place, to consider pious prayers as the proper means of bringing about the events with which they are connected in the divine purpose. Though God is able to work without means, yet he has been pleased to adopt means into his plan of operation. And according to this mode of operation, means are absolutely necessary in order to accomplish the designs of God. As he designed to save Noah and his family, by the instrumentality of the ark, so it was absolutely necessary that the ark should be built. As he designed to deliver Israel by the hand of Moses, so it was absolutely necessary that Moses should be preserved by the daughter of Pharaoh. And as he designed to save Paul from shipwreck by the exertion of the sailors, so it was absolutely necessary that the sailors should abide in the ship. In the same manner, the prayers of saints are the necessary means of procuring those favors, or of bringing about those events, which God has connected with their petitions. This will appear from a single consideration. If prayers did not really operate as means in procuring divine favors, then it would be as proper to pray for divine blessings after they are granted, as before. But this we all know to be absurd. Suppose a good man hears that his friend at a distance is dangerously sick, it is certainly proper that he should pray for his life. But supposing he is credibly informed, a few weeks after, that his friend is entirely restored to health; it is certainly improper that he should continue to pray for the removal of his sickness. The reason is, while his friend was sick, his prayers might be the means of procuring his recovery; but after that event had actually taken place, his prayers could no longer operate as means of bringing it to pass. Hence it appears that the immutability of the divine purposes, instead of destroying, actually establishes the necessity and prevalence of prayer. The more indissolubly God has fixed the connection between our praying and his hearing, the more we are bound and encouraged to pray. After God had promised his people in Babylon, that he would restore them to their former prosperity, he expressly said, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." But who can imagine

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that God's promise to bless his people in answer to prayer, should destroy the propriety or the influence of their prayers for promised blessings?

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If it be the design of prayer to move God to bestow temporal and spiritual favors, then there is a propriety in praying for others, as well as for ourselves. We find intercession to be much inculcated in the word of God. The Psalmist calls upon saints to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem;" that is, for the general prosperity of the church. Paul represents intercession as the first and principal branch of prayer. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." And James enjoins the duty of intercession upon every christian. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." Those who possess universal benevolence, find a peculiar pleasure in praying for others. And it appears from scripture, that the most eminent saints have always been the most remarkable intercessors at the throne of divine grace. But were it not the design of prayer to move God to show mercy, there would be no propriety nor importance in praying for any but ourselves. If, as many pious divines have taught, the only purpose of prayer is to prepare ourselves to receive or to be denied divine favors, then there seems to be no ground or reason to pray for the temporal or spiritual good of our fellow men. Our prayers can have no tendency to prepare them for either the smiles or frowns of heaven. If we pray for their outward prosperity, this can have no tendency to prepare them for the reception of external blessings. If we pray for their deliverance from outward evils, this can have no tendency to prepare them for the removal of afflictions. If we pray for their right improvement of divine favors or divine judgments, this can have no tendency to inspire their hearts with either gratitude or submission. Indeed, our prayers for others can answer no other purpose than that of moving the Deity to do them good. Take away this design of intercession, and it ceases to have any meaning, and to answer any valuable end. But if, as we have shown, it be the proper design of prayer to move the Deity to bestow favors, then the effectual, fervent prayers of the righteous may have a powerful tendency to draw down divine blessings upon others, as well as upon themselves. Upon this ground, intercession appears to be as proper and important as any other branch of prayer.

2. We are led to conclude, from what has been said upon

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this subject, that we have as fair an opportunity of obtaining divine favors, as if God were to form his determinations at the time we present our petitions. Many imagine that it is a great discouragement to prayer, that God has determined, from all eternity, what he will grant and what he will deny to the children of men. But it appears from what has been said, that our prayers may have all the influence now, in procuring divine favors, that they could have if God were now to form his purposes respecting us. For he actually formed his eternal purposes in the full view of all our prayers, and gave them all the weight they deserved. It is as strictly true, therefore, that our prayers move him to grant us favors, as if he determined at the time of our praying to grant them. Hence we have as fair an opportunity of prevailing upon the Deity to grant us any particular future blessings, as if we knew he had yet to form his purpose of granting or denying it.

This may be easily and clearly illustrated. Suppose two men are condemned to die. Suppose a certain day is set for each of them to plead for pardon before the king. Suppose each criminal has a friend, who unknown to him, goes to the king before the day appointed, and states his case exactly as it is, and offers all the reasons for his being pardoned that can be offered. And suppose the king upon hearing the pleas made in favor of each criminal, absolutely determines to pardon one, and to execute the other. Let me now ask, Can these fixed determinations of the king be any disadvantage to the criminals, when they actually make their own pleas before him on the day appointed? Thus God foresaw from eternity all his suppliants, and all their supplications, and gave them all the weight that an infinitely wise and benevolent Being ought to give them. Their prayers, therefore, avail as much as it is possible they should avail, were God to form his determinations at the time they stand praying before him.

But here perhaps it may be said, there is no occasion of their praying at all, if God foresaw their prayers from eternity, and fixed his purposes in connection with them. The answer to this is easy. When God determines to do any thing one way, he equally determines not to do it another way. When he determines to bring about any event by prayer, he equally determines not to bring about that event without prayer. Thus when he determined to deliver his people from the Babylonish captivity, in answer to the prayers of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and other pious Israelites, he equally determined not to deliver them, if he were not inquired of by those good men to do it for them. Indeed, the influence of prayer properly consists in moving God to execute those purposes which were formed in

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connection with prayer. In some cases, God has not only revealed his purposes, but also revealed that they are to be accomplished in answer to prayer. In all such cases, prayers are as necessary as any other appointed means of accomplishing the divine purposes. And though in most cases God has not revealed his purposes, nor whether they are to be accomplished by prayer, yet if some of his unrevealed purposes are connected with prayer, the accomplishment of these particular purposes as much depends upon prayer, as upon any other means or second causes. Hence it appears, that every person may do as much to obtain temporal and eternal blessings, by sincere and submissive prayer, as if God had not from eternity absolutely determined when, and where, and upon whom, to bestow his favors. Even importunity, ardor, and perseverance in prayer, are as proper and as influential in order to obtain any divine blessing, on supposition of God's immutability, as they could be on supposition of his being now at liberty to alter his past purposes, or to form his determinations anew. And since this is the case, we have all the encouragement to pray for divine favors, that rational, dependent, ill deserving creatures can reasonably desire, or can possibly enjoy. For God has determined, from eternity, to hear every prayer that ought to be heard.

3. We learn from what has been said, the propriety of praying for future, as well as for present blessings. If it were the sole design of prayer to prepare our own hearts for the reception of divine favors, there could be no propriety in praying for any far distant good to be bestowed upon ourselves or others. But if it be the proper design of addressing the throne of divine grace, to move the compassion of God, then we may pray for future mercies with as much propriety as for present relief; and our prayers may be of as much avail to draw down divine favors upon the world, hundreds and thousands of years hence, as at this day. There is great reason to believe that the prayers of good men, in all ages, have had a mighty influence in moving God to bestow great and extensive blessings upon future generations of mankind. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, no doubt, prayed that God would put their future posterity into the possession of the land of promise. All the while the Jews were in Babylon, those who were Israelites indeed, no doubt incessantly prayed for their restoration to their native country at the period predicted. All good men, from Adam to Simeon, undoubtedly prayed for the fulfilment of the first promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In all these instances, the prayers of holy men were not lost, but had great influence in procuring long desired and far distant bles-

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sings. Our Saviour taught his disciples to pray for the future enlargement of his kingdom, saying, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." God intends to send the gospel to the ends of the earth, and bring all nations into his kingdom. And we may presume that the fervent prayers of myriads of pious christians, will avail much to bring about this great and desirable event. If prayer be designed to move God to bestow mercy, then it may be as proper and as important to pray for the prosperity of the church and the happiness of mankind to the remotest ages, as to pray for any present temporal or spiritual good. As the prayers of our pious progenitors have procured great and distinguishing favors for us, so our humble and fervent prayers may procure the best of blessings for our distant posterity. Indeed, it is our indispensable duty to pray for the accomplishment of all the purposes and predictions of God, which remain to be accomplished.

4. It appears from what has been said, that saints are in a safe and happy condition. They enjoy the benefit of the prayers of all the people of God. Good men are required to pray for one another, and they live in the daily performance of this duty. They make intercessions and supplications for all the friends of Zion. They continually pray for the enlargement and prosperity of the church; which is virtually praying for the peace, and comfort, and edification of every sincere christian on earth. These prayers of God's people are very efficacious. They have all the influence which any good man can desire, to draw down the blessings of God upon him. Must it not be a source of peculiar satisfaction to any pious pilgrim and stranger on earth, to reflect that all God's people are constantly praying for him, while he is passing through this vale of tears? The effectual fervent prayers of the friends of God for one another, ought to comfort, quicken, and animate them to run with patience and confidence the race that is set before them. They may rely upon it, that they will never be forgotten nor forsaken of God, while so many memorials in their favor are daily presented to the throne of divine grace.

5. This subject may remind sinners of what they have to fear from the prayers of saints. Their united supplications for the honor of God, the accomplishment of his designs, and the overthrow of all his incorrigible enemies, forebode terrible and eternal evils to impenitent sinners. The prayers of Noah proved fatal to the old world. The prayers of Lot proved fatal to Sodom. The prayers of Moses proved fatal to the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The prayers of Joshua proved fatal to the inhabitants of Canaan. The prayers of Elijah proved the ruin of Ahab. The prayers of David destroyed Ahithophel.

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And the apostle John represents the prayers of saints as one procuring cause of the wasting judgments which God has sent, and is still sending upon the antichristian world, by the ministers of his vengeance. "I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." This is a lively representation of the power of prayer, to enkindle the wrath of God against the enemies of his church. The wicked, therefore, have abundant reason to tremble at the powerful intercession of the people of God against them. In their present state, they have nothing to expect but that the prayers of saints will prove their final ruin. They certainly will, unless they repent and believe the gospel.

6. Since prayer has such a prevailing influence upon the heart of the Deity, saints have great encouragement to abound in this duty. They are formed for this devout and holy exercise. Having become the children of God, they possess the spirit of adoption, which is the spirit of grace and supplication. It was said of Saul of Tarsus, as soon as he was converted, "Behold! he prayeth." Prayer is the proper business of good men, who have the greatest encouragement to call upon God without ceasing. Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed. And God has never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." Their prayers are always heard and accepted, even though the things they pray for be not immediately, nor eventually granted. But besides this, there are many other motives which ought to prevail upon all good men to abound in the duty of prayer.

Let them consider in the first place, that this duty is very generally neglected. Though all men ought to pray and not to faint, yet how many cast off fear and restrain prayer before God! How many rise up and lie down, go out and come in, without acknowledging God in any of their ways! How many are so averse to prayer, that nothing but some threatening danger, or pressing calamity, can bring them to the throne of divine grace! How many prayerless families, and prayerless persons are to be found in every place! This melancholy

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reflection ought to animate the few friends of God in the world to cry mightily for themselves, and for thoughtless, guilty, perishing sinners.

Let them consider, in the next place, the peculiar pleasure to be found in devotion. When do saints enjoy more of heaven upon earth, than while they are drawing near to God, and unbosoming themselves to their heavenly Father? What divine satisfaction did Job, David, Daniel, and other devout men enjoy, while they were fervently praying for the peace and prosperity of Zion! Prayer naturally fixes the attention upon the character, the conduct, and the designs of the Deity, and upon all those great and amiable objects which are suited to gratify every holy and devout affection. Jacob never enjoyed a happier season, than while his whole soul was vigorously wrestling with God in prayer. God is ever ready to reward those who call upon him in sincerity, with the peculiar manifestations of his love. And this is certainly an animating motive to pray without ceasing and without fainting.

Let them consider, in the third place, that humble, fervent, constant prayer, will give them life and spirit in the performance of all other duties. They will meditate, they will read the word of God, they will hear the gospel preached, they will attend divine ordinances, they will pursue their secular concerns, and converse with their fellow men, very much in the same manner in which they call upon God. If they maintain a daily intercourse with the Deity, and sincerely implore his gracious presence and assistance, they will find themselves ready to every good work, and exhibit an amiable example of virtue and piety to all around them. They will most certainly live as they pray.

In the last place, let them seriously consider, that constancy, sincerity and fervency in prayer, will be the best means to prepare them for dying. It is the natural tendency of this duty to inspire the mind with clear and realizing views of invisible and divine objects. It is principally by prayer, that saints become familiar with the scenes which lie beyond the grave, and prepare for an easy and joyful transition out of time into eternity. Hence we find the ancient patriarchs spent their last moments in prayer. The last words of David were employed in thanksgiving and praise. Stephen died calling upon God. And the great Redeemer expired in the act of praying. Those who live prayerfully, are prepared to die prayerfully. And who would not wish to leave this world, and appear before God in a praying frame?

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SERMON LXVIII.

THE FAITH OF MIRACLES.

And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. MATTHEW, xxi. 22.

In order to set this peculiar promise in a just and clear light, I shall inquire,

I. To whom it was made;

II. What was the extent of it;

III. What was the condition of it; and

IV. Whether it be applicable to christians at the present day.

I. We are to inquire to whom the promise in the text was made.

Soon after Christ began to preach, and had converted a number of his hearers, he chose from among them twelve men to be his disciples; to whom he gave authority to preach the gospel, and power to work miracles. Matthew says, "When he had called to him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." Mark says, "He called unto him whom he would, and they came to him. And he ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." And Luke tells us, that "after these things, the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city, and place whither he himself would come," to preach the gospel and work miracles. These particular persons Christ appointed and qualified to preach and to work miracles before his crucifixion; but after his resurrection, and just before his ascension to heaven,

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he gave a more general commission to his apostles and to others to work miracles. And he said unto the eleven, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Here Christ promised to bestow the power of working miracles, not only upon the apostles and their successors in the gospel ministry, but also upon common christians. How long this power of working miracles was continued in the church, it is not easy nor necessary to ascertain; though we have pretty good evidence from ecclesiastical history that it continued, in more or less instances, until the third or fourth century. Now it appears that the promise in the text was made to those who possessed miraculous powers in particular, not only from the context, but from several other similar passages of the scripture. In the verses preceding the text, it is said, "When Jesus saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away? Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this, which is done to the fig tree, but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Mark mentions this same promise in nearly the same language. He says, "In the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold the fig tree which thou cursedst, is withered away. And Jesus answering, saith unto him, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith: Therefore, I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Our Saviour made a similar promise to his disciples in the fourteenth of John. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do," (that is, miraculous works) "shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto the Father. And whatso-

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ever ye shall ask in my name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." He repeats the same promise in the sixteenth of John. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." It plainly appears from all these similar passages, that the promise in the text was made to the apostles, and to all those primitive christians who possessed miraculous powers. Christ promised all such persons, that if they should pray in faith for any miracle, their prayer should be heard, and the very miracle they prayed for should be granted.

II. We are to inquire concerning the extent of the promise. "*All things whatsoever* ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Though this promise seems to be indefinite and universal, yet we must suppose it was in some measure, or in some sense, limited. It is very natural to conclude, from the peculiar character of the persons to whom it was made, that it had a sole and immediate respect to the bestowment of miraculous gifts. Christ meant to assure those to whom he had given, and should give the power of working miracles, that, if they prayed in faith for any supernatural gift in particular, that particular gift should be granted. But we have no reason to think that, if they prayed for any thing else, believing it would be granted, that particular thing would be granted. The promise was undoubtedly limited and restricted to miraculous gifts, and had no respect to any other favors. If those who possessed the power of working miracles had prayed for any common temporal or spiritual blessings in particular, they had no ground to expect that those particular blessings would be granted in answer to the promise in the text. We know that the apostles and primitive christians were subject to poverty, pain, sickness, and all the common trials and afflictions of the present life; and though they undoubtedly prayed that these natural evils might be prevented, mitigated, or removed, yet it does not appear that their prayers respecting those things were always granted. But if the promise in the text were unlimited and universal, it seems that they might have prayed for any common favors, with the same faith and assurance of being heard, as when they prayed for miraculous gifts.

III. Let us inquire with respect to the condition of the promise under consideration. It is said in the text, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive." And in another place it is said, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, *believe* that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." This promise was expressly made upon the condition of a certain kind of faith. If those to whom it was

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made, exercised that certain kind of faith, their faith absolutely secured the fulfilment of the promise; but if they failed of exercising the faith required, the promise was not fulfilled. We find an instance of this in the seventeenth of Matthew. There we read, "A certain man came to Christ, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed; for oft times he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, because of your unbelief; for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." So far we may be assured, that the promise made in the text was made upon the condition of a certain kind of faith, the least degree of which secured the fulfilment of it. The question now is, wherein did the faith of miracles differ from any other kind of faith? To this I answer that it differed from every other kind of faith, in respect to the *peculiar foundation* of it, which was a peculiar power of working miracles, given to all the apostles and to some common christians, in the primitive days of the gospel. Christ promised those to whom he had given the power of working miracles, that he would assist them in working any miracle they desired to work, upon the condition of their believing that he would assist them, according to his promise; which ran in this form: "These signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." This was a promise distinct from the promise of eternal life to true penitents; and the faith of miracles was built upon this distinct promise, and not upon the promise of eternal life. This appears from the account we have of Peter's faith in working a miracle. "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple. Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. And Peter fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to

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receive something of them. Then Peter said, silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." "And as the lame man, who was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go." "And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Here we have a plain and intelligible illustration of the faith of miracles, or that faith to which the promise in the text was made. Peter knew that Christ had given him the peculiar power of working miracles, and that he had promised to assist him in working any miracle, upon the condition of his exercising faith in that promise to assist him. Accordingly, in the exercise of faith in that promise, he said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Saving faith consists in cordially approving the way of salvation by Christ; but the faith of miracles consisted in believing his promise to assist those, whom he had endowed with miraculous power, to perform any miracle which they desired to perform. It is easy to see that a faith founded upon a promise, is very different from a faith that is not founded upon a promise. Christ did promise those whom he had endowed with miraculous power, that he would assist them in working any miracle, if they would believe in his promise of assistance. Those, therefore, who exercised the faith of miracles in the primitive days of Christianity, could give as good a reason for their peculiar faith, as others could for their faith in the gospel. Though their faith of miracles was different from saving faith, yet it was built upon as plain, as intelligible, and as firm a foundation, as saving faith; for it was built upon a divine promise, which they were bound to believe. It now remains to inquire,

IV. Whether christians, at this day, have a right to apply the promise in the text to themselves in any case whatever, or whether ministers, at this day, have a right to say to christians, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Some devout divines have applied this promise to christians, and some devout christians have applied it to

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themselves, and professed to have acted under the influence of it. But it is a very serious and important question, whether this be not a misunderstanding, a misapplying, and a perverting of the promise. And perhaps it will appear in this light, if we consider the following observations.

1. This promise was made to particular persons, and in respect to a particular object. It was made to those who possessed miraculous powers, and with respect to their exercising those powers. All the primitive christians were not endowed with supernatural gifts. Though these were bestowed as largely and generally upon the church of Corinth, as upon any other christian church at that day, yet Paul asked, "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" Many were converted some time before they received miraculous gifts. Hence Paul asked certain disciples whom he found at Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? and they said, Unto John's baptism." He then told them, that John baptized his converts upon their faith in Him who was to come. "And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laids his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied." When the evangelist Philip had preached the gospel in Samaria and converted many, Peter and John, two apostles, were sent thither; "And when they had come down, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus;) then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Their receiving the Holy Ghost signified their receiving the gift of miracles, and not the gift of special grace. This the converts had received before the apostles laid their hands upon them. As the gift of the Holy Ghost was not conferred upon all christians, so none but those upon whom that gift was conferred, possessed miraculous powers, and had a right to claim the promise in the text, and to presume to act by virtue of it. The gift of miracles was like the gift of prophecy. When a man had received the gift of prophecy, he was established as a prophet, and had a right to depend upon a prophetic spirit. After Samuel had once received the gift of prophecy, all Israel knew that he was established to be a prophet of the Lord. So when a christian had once received the gift of the Holy Ghost, he had a right to work miracles,

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and to claim the promise in the text. Though we cannot tell *how* a man, who had received the gift of prophecy, knew that he had received that gift, nor how a christian, who had received the gift of miracles, knew that he had received that gift; yet we must suppose that a man who had received the gift of prophecy, knew that he had received it, and that a christian, who had received the gift of miracles, knew that he had receiv-ed it. As those, therefore, who had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, knew that they had received it, so they had a right to apply the promise in the text to themselves; but as those who had not received the gift of the Holy Ghost, must have known that they had not received it, so they had no right to apply the promise in the text to themselves. It hence follows that christians at this day, who have not received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and know that they have not received it, have no right to apply the promise in the text to themselves; nor to pray for any supernatural gift, believing that they shall receive it, by virtue of the promise.

2. If christians at this day apply the promise in the text to themselves, they must do it upon the principle that *believing* a thing to be true, will *make* it true, which we know is false. Some of the Jews in Christ's day believed that he was a tem-poral prince, and would deliver their nation from all their tem-poral enemies; but this did not make it true. The Jews in general since that time, have believed that Christ was an impos-tor; but this has not made it true. Paul believed that he was a good man, and stood high in the favor of God, before he was converted; but this did not make it true. If any thing be not true before it is believed to be true, the believing of it to be true cannot make it so. If the promise in the text was not made to any who had not received the Holy Ghost, then if any who have not received the Holy Ghost believe that it is made to them, their believing this to be true will not make it true. There is no doubt but that some christians in these latter days, have believed that the promise in the text was made to them, and have prayed for particular favors, with a strong belief that the particular favors they prayed for would be granted accord-ing to their faith, but have commonly, if not always, been dis-appointed.

3. It appears from the limitation of the promise in the text, that it cannot apply to christians at this day. The promise was limited to those only who had received the Holy Ghost, and in respect to his supernatural gifts alone. It gave them no assur-ance that, if they prayed for any thing except some supernatural gift, they should certainly receive it. And since those who had received the Holy Ghost, had no right to exercise faith in this

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promise in respect to any common favors, it necessarily follows that common christians, at this day, have no right to exercise faith in this promise, in respect to praying for common favors. It is absurd to suppose that all things whatsoever christians at this day shall ask in prayer, believing, they shall receive, when this was not true in regard to those who had received the gift of the Holy Ghost. This would be to suppose that, if any particular christian now should ask for any particular grace, believing he should receive it, he would receive it; or if he should ask to be preserved from any particular danger, believing that he should be preserved, he would be preserved; or if he should ask for temporal prosperity, believing it should be granted, it would be granted. If it be absurd to suppose these things, then it is absurd to suppose that christians, at this day, have a right to apply the promise in the text to themselves in any case whatever. I may add,

4. We have reason to believe that pious persons have often prayed properly for particular favors, and yet have been denied. David fasted and prayed for his sick child, that it might live; but it died. Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh, whatever it was, might be removed; but instead of removing it, "the Lord said, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul had undoubtedly read and believed the promise in the text, when he besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in his flesh might depart from him; but he did not exercise faith in the promise, because he knew it did not respect natural, but only supernatural gifts. Christ prayed repeatedly and fervently that the cup of suffering might pass from him; but that cup did not pass from him. Though he knew that his Father always heard and approved his prayers, yet he did not always expect that he would always grant whatever he prayed for, except he prayed for some miraculous gift; and then it was always granted as he expected. These instances clearly show that christians, at this day, have no right to apply the promise in the text to themselves, nor to exercise faith in it, in praying for any thing whatsoever.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the apostles, and primitive preachers and professors of Christianity, were endowed with supernatural gifts, then we can easily account for the rapid and extensive spread of the gospel, for three or four hundred years after its first publication. All civil and ecclesiastical historians agree in the fact, that the gospel did spread far and wide in that period of the church, without the aid of civil or military power, and in opposition to

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Jewish prejudices, and heathen superstition, idolatry, learning and philosophy. Gibbon, and other deistical writers, have endeavored to account for this event, without a divine and miraculous interposition in favor of Christianity. But they can give no satisfactory evidence in support of their infidel opinion. The inspired writers alone give us full and infallible information upon this subject. The account they give us of the supernatural powers conferred on the apostles and their followers, constrains us to believe that the gospel must have triumphed over all opposition, wherever it was carried by men armed with miraculous powers. Not only the apostles, but all the churches which they planted, possessed a great variety of supernatural gifts. They possessed the word of wisdom, which enabled them to understand and explain the Old Testament types and predictions of Christ. They possessed the power of prophecy, which enabled them to foretell future events. They possessed the gift of tongues, which enabled them to speak to every nation in their own language. They possessed the power of casting out evil spirits, and of healing all manner of bodily diseases and infirmities. The frequent exercise of such supernatural powers must have carried an irresistible conviction to the minds of men, of the truth, divinity and importance of the gospel, which they heard preached with the utmost clearness and pungency. It is not by any means incredible, that the preaching of the gospel, attended by a combination of supernatural powers, should confound the heathen priests, silence the heathen oracles, overturn the heathen temples, and subvert the whole system of heathen idolatry, superstition and fanaticism. No mere human power and exertion can account for the astonishing spread of the gospel in the primitive times of Christianity; and nothing short of those supernatural powers bestowed upon the propagators of it, could have enabled them to produce the great and glorious effects which it is universally acknowledged they did produce. And since such miraculous powers were absolutely necessary to promote the spread of the gospel through Judea, Asia, and the whole Roman empire, at first, it is very reasonable to suppose that those supernatural gifts were continued in the church so long, and no longer than they were necessary to promote the gospel. Accordingly, the best historians tell us that they gradually decreased, and finally ceased about the close of the third century.

2. If christians have no right, at this day, to apply the promise in the text to themselves, then they have no right to pray for any favor, whether temporal or spiritual, private or public, absolutely and unsubmissively. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of

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lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning." "He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." He has infallibly determined when, and where, and upon whom, he will bestow all his favors; and christians have no right to desire, or to ask him to alter any of his determinations respecting themselves or others. And since they never know, beforehand, his determinations respecting the bestowment of any future favors, they have no right to ask for any thing which he has not absolutely promised, without unreserved submission to his will. Though he has promised Christ that he will save all those whom he has given him in the covenant of redemption, yet christians have no right to pray absolutely and unconditionally for the salvation of any particular sinner, because they do not know that it is his will to save that particular person. Though they ought to pray for those that are sick, that they may be recovered to health, yet they ought not to pray for this favor absolutely and unconditionally, because they do not know that it is the will of God to grant it. And though they ought to pray for all mankind, that both temporal and spiritual blessings may be bestowed upon them, yet they have no right, in any case, to pray for any public favors, absolutely and unconditionally, because they do not know what public favors God has determined to bestow. Their prayers in all cases, and in respect to all things, ought to be made conditionally and submissively. And whenever they pray conditionally and submissively, they pray that whatever they ask for may not be granted, if God see best to deny them. Christ has set a perfect example of submissive prayer, in his address to his Father, in the garden, respecting his tremendous sufferings on the cross. There he kneeled down and prayed, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." His will was to have God remove the cup from him, if he were pleased to do it; but if not, he prayed that his petition might be denied, and the will of his Father might be done. Christians, at this day, ought always to follow this example in all their prayers for themselves and others, and in respect to every thing they pray for. They have no right to imagine that "*all things* whatsoever they shall ask in prayer, believing, they shall receive." This promise was given to certain persons for a certain time, and does not belong to them, and they have no right to exercise faith in it.

3. If christians have no right, at this day, to exercise faith in the promise in the text, then they have no right to exercise faith in their own peculiar *feelings* or *impressions*. The apostles and primitive christians, who possessed miraculous powers, did

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not believe that all things whatsoever they asked in prayer should be granted, because they had peculiar feelings and impressions respecting what they asked; but they believed that whatsoever they asked would be granted, because a divine promise had been given them, that whatever they asked in faith of that promise should be granted. They knew that the promise in the text was made to their faith, and not to their feelings, or peculiar impressions. They did not expect to work a miracle because they had a certain impression that they could work a miracle; but they expected to work a miracle, because they believed in the promise of divine assistance to work a miracle. Since those who possessed miraculous powers had no right to believe that whatever they asked in prayer would be granted, on account of any peculiar impression that it would be granted, it is certainly absurd for christians at this day, who are totally destitute of miraculous powers, to believe that they shall receive whatever they ask in prayer, on account of some peculiar impression which they have that what they ask they shall certainly receive. Though christians, at this day, have no promise that whatever they pray for shall be granted; yet they sometimes have a strong impression on their minds that a certain favor they ardently desire will be bestowed, if they pray for it on the ground of that impression. But since they have no promise to believe in, they have no right to believe in, any impression that what they pray for shall be granted. There is reason to fear that christians, many times, believe in an impression instead of a promise, and confidently expect that God will grant what they are deeply impressed he will grant, if they ask for it. Men are naturally disposed to regard peculiar impressions, and to be influenced by them in their hopes, and fears, and prayers. We sometimes hear of persons having promises come to their minds, and making deep impressions on them. And it is very probable that the promise in the text has come to the minds of many persons, and made deep impressions upon them, and led them to imagine that they really believed the promise, while they only believed the impressions made by it. It is more than possible that some may now recollect certain impressions, which led them to pray for certain favors, in great confidence that they would be granted. But no one has a right to exercise faith in his own peculiar feelings or impressions. There are no promises made to any impressions. All the promises of the gospel are made to some holy exercise or affection, and to nothing in which men are entirely passive.

4. If christians, at this day, have no right to apply the promise in the text to themselves, then those who apply it to them-

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selves are in danger of running into gross errors and delusions. There have been many individuals, among almost all denominations of christians, who have applied the promise to themselves, and have prayed and acted under a supposed influence of it. They have believed that, if they prayed for particular favors, in the belief that the favors would be granted, they should certainly receive them. And they have built their faith in the promise, not upon having supernatural gifts, but upon their having peculiar and uncommon impressions, in respect to the favors they prayed for. Such an application of the text, and of similar passages in the New Testament, has led some to expect what they had no right to expect. It has led them to pray for certain things with an ardent desire and belief that they would be granted. It led Mr. Whitefield confidently to expect what he had no right confidently to expect. He had an amiable, promising little son, whom he ardently desired and prayed might be an eminently useful minister, and he had such strong and agreeable impressions concerning him, that he confidently expected that he would be what he so ardently desired and prayed that he might be. But his son died when he was about four years old, and the event not only disappointed him, but cured him of his error. The misapplication of the promise in the text has led some confidently to expect that a certain man would be their minister, because they had a strong impression and a lively faith that he would be their minister: but they were disappointed. The same groundless faith has led others to expect that a certain man would be ordained in a certain place, on a certain day; but the event did not take place. The misunderstanding and misapplying this text has led some confidently to expect, and publicly to predict that there would be a revival of religion in such and such places, and such and such persons would be converted at such and such particular times; but their hopes and predictions were not realized. The same misapprehension and misapplication of the same promise, have led some to go where they had no right to go, and to do what they had no right to do, and what they afterwards bitterly regretted. These facts are capable of being fully substantiated. And they have taken place, as I said, among almost if not all denominations of christians. Impressions have governed the faith of Quakers, of Congregationalists, of Methodists, of Universalists, and even of Deists. Relly, the father of the Murray Universalists, professed to be governed in speaking and acting by internal impressions. And Lord Herbert, the father of Deists, professed to be guided by internal impressions. The great adversary endeavored to lead Christ astray, by the misapplication of a promise. And probably this has been, for

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ages, his most successful method of leading both sincere and insincere christians into the most absurd and fatal errors and delusions. He first makes certain impressions on their minds, which leads them to misunderstand and misapply promises in their favor. How often does he lead sinners to entertain a false hope, by applying promises made to christians, to themselves! How often does he lead christians to adopt the sentiment, that if they believe a thing to be true, it will make it true; that if they believe a thing to be right, it will make it right; or if they believe an event will happen, it will make it happen. It is easy to see that by this mode of seduction, he can lead mankind into any errors and delusions he pleases. Paul was sensible of this diabolical artifice, and cautions the Corinthians against it. He says, "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy." "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Men are very fond of thinking that if any agreeable impressions are made upon their minds, they must be made by some good spirit. But they ought to remember that impressions may be made by an evil spirit, as well as by a good spirit. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."

5. If no other peculiar promise respecting prayer, was made to those who possessed miraculous powers, but the promise in the text, and other similar promises, then all the other promises made to prayer are applicable to christians at this day. They have a right to exercise faith in the general promise, "He that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." They have a right to exercise faith also in innumerable other promises made to the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous. They have all the encouragement to pray in faith of the promises, that they can reasonably desire. God has never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain;" but he has assured them, that if they pray aright, they shall always be heard; and either receive what they pray for in particular, or something more for his glory and their good. In order to pray aright, they must pray with a real desire for those things they pray for, and with a cordial submission to the will of God, whether he shall grant or deny their requests. And when they offer up such prayers, they are always his delight, and shall avail much, though they do not obtain the particular things they ask for. And this is all they ought to desire, or do desire, when they pray aright.

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PART XIX.

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

SERMONS LXIX.—LXXII.

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SERMON LXIX.

THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

UPON THE FIRST EXERCISE OF HOLINESS, CONSISTENT WITH THE INDISPENSABLE DUTY OF PERSEVERANCE IN HOLINESS THROUGH LIFE.

VERILY, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation. — JOHN, v. 24. —— But he that endureth to the end shall be saved. — MATT. x. 22.

IF the Bible was written by divine inspiration, we must believe that not only all the parts of it are true, but also that all the parts of it are consistent with each other. We find, however, more difficulty in discovering the consistency, than the truth of those things contained in it. We can easily see that what Christ says at one time is true, and what he says at another time is true; but we cannot so easily see that those things which he says at one time are consistent with those he says at another; and this holds true in respect to all the inspired writers. But it is of importance to discover not only the truth, but the consistency, of the various parts of scripture. And for this reason I have placed together two passages, which, though they easily appear to be true, do not so easily appear to be consistent. When Christ says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation," we very readily assent to the truth of the declaration; and when he says, "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved," we as readily assent to the truth of this declaration. But how these two dec-

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larations agree with each other, some perhaps cannot so easily and clearly apprehend. The first condition of salvation seems to be inconsistent with the second, and the second to be inconsistent with the first. In order to set these two passages of scripture in a plain and consistent light, I propose,

I. To show that the Bible sometimes promises eternal life upon the condition of the first exercise of holiness.

II. To show that the Bible sometimes promises eternal life upon the condition of perseverance in holiness. And,

III. To make it appear that the promises upon these two conditions of salvation are really consistent with each other.

I. I am to show that the Bible sometimes promises eternal life upon the condition of the first exercise of holiness.

Our blessed Saviour, every where in the gospel, promises eternal life to every one upon the first exercise of faith, or any other holy affection. He begins his sermon on the mount with these promises. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace makers; for they shall be called the children of God." In another place he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Again he says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." And again he says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find." He spake two parables to illustrate this truth, that salvation is promised upon the first exercise of grace. In the parable of the publican, he makes him say only, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and immediately subjoins, that he "went down to his house justified." As soon as he repented, he was justified, and promised eternal life. He gives the same representation in the parable of the prodigal. As soon as he returned, he was freely and fully forgiven. Christ commonly promised final salvation upon the first exercise of faith. He said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned;" and "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Or as it is in the text, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." Accordingly in his last commission to his ambassadors, he directs them to offer salvation to all in this form: "He

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that believeth shall be saved." Now in all these promises of salvation, Christ makes the first exercise of faith, or of any holy affection, the condition of future and eternal life. He has no qualifying expressions. He says nothing about the degree, or the strength, or the continuance of faith, repentance, or any exercise of holiness, to which the promise of eternal salvation is made. But his mode of speaking in the text and elsewhere, plainly implies an infallible connection between the first exercise of grace, and final salvation. This warranted the apostle to say, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." And again, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." But yet we find,

II. That the Bible sometimes promises eternal life upon the condition of perseverance in holiness. This condition of salvation is expressed by various terms. Sometimes by the phrase, enduring unto the end. Christ uses this phrase in the text. "But he that endureth unto the end shall be saved." Again he says, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, shall be saved." The apostle James says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life." And the apostle Paul says, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." Christ makes abiding in him and in his doctrine, a term of salvation. In the fifteenth of John, he says, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." The apostle John says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son." Continuance in holiness is often mentioned as a term of salvation. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." The apostle, speaking of God's judging the world, says, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor and immortality, eternal life." Again he says to the Colossians, "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he, (Christ,) reconciled, in the body of his flesh, through death, to

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present you holy and unblamable, and unreprovable in his sight; if ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard." And the apostle James declares, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." And Christ says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." I may farther observe, that *overcoming* is another condition, upon which future and eternal happiness is frequently promised. Christ says, "To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations." "And I will give him the morning star." "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." "Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." And "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Also, "He that overcometh, shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Now it appears from all these passages of scripture, that *enduring*, *abiding*, *continuing* and *overcoming*, are conditions of salvation. And all these conditions are so many proofs, that perseverance in holiness is absolutely necessary in order to secure eternal life. I might here add many scripture exhortations, warnings and admonitions, which are addressed to saints, and which clearly carry the idea that perseverance in holiness is one indispensable condition, upon which eternal life is promised in the gospel. But I will not any farther enlarge upon so plain a point. I have now proved two things proposed, that the Bible sometimes promises eternal life upon the condition of the first exercise of holiness; and sometimes promises eternal life upon the condition of perseverance in holiness unto the end of life. Both these are plain and undeniable truths. Both must be admitted, or both be denied. But neither of them can be denied, without denying the plainest declarations of scripture. We must, therefore, admit them both, whether we can or cannot reconcile them with each other. But, perhaps, we may

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intelligibly reconcile them with each other. This then we are to attempt, by showing,

III. That the promises upon these two conditions are consistent with each other. Here then, if we can only discover the true meaning of these two promises, we may easily see whether they are or are not consistent with each other. The first is a promise of eternal life, upon the condition of the first holy exercise of heart. And this promise implies two things. One is, that the person who exercises the least degree of grace shall certainly be saved; that is, whoever exercises one holy affection shall not come into condemnation, but eventually secure the salvation of his soul. And the other thing contained in the first promise is, that whoever has one holy exercise shall have another and another in succession, to the end of life. In this sense Christ often explained his first promise. He often declared that those who once loved him and believed in him, should continue in their love and faith and every holy affection until they arrived to the kingdom of heaven. He said to the woman of Samaria, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." And "in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." Here Christ promises that the first exercises of holiness shall be followed by a long and endless series; or in other words, he connects perseverance in holiness with the first exercises of it. And he expresses this connection between the first and following exercises of grace, in the tenth of John: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Paul suggests the same idea to the saints at Philippi: "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Peter addresses christians in similar terms. "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ; grace unto you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;

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to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." This first promise then, implies not only that all true believers shall be saved, but that they shall be saved by *perseverance* in holiness, and growth in grace.

But the second promise of eternal life to those who endure unto the end, implies only that perseverance in holiness is absolutely necessary to salvation. Now, if we have given the true meaning of these two promises, it appears that the first does not militate against the second, nor the second against the first. For the first cannot militate against the second, unless it be in one of these two ways: either because it renders the second impossible, or because it renders it void and useless.

It is clear that the first does not render the second impossible; for though it promises salvation upon the condition of the first exercise of faith, yet it does not confine salvation to the first exercise of faith, to the exclusion of all future exercises of grace. It does not imply that the man who begins to love, or repent, or believe, shall be immediately translated to heaven. If it implied this, it would in reality render the promise of eternal life upon condition of perseverance in holiness, utterly impossible. For as soon as the man had performed the first condition, it would be out of his power to perform the second. Suppose God had promised Enoch, that if he for once exercised faith, he should instantly be translated to heaven; and at the same time promised to save him upon the condition that he should walk in obedience to him two hundred years. It is easy to see that the first promise would preclude the second. For if Enoch performed the first condition, and was immediately translated to heaven, he could not perform the second, and persevere in holiness here on earth. So if the promise of eternal life upon the first exercise of faith, confined salvation to that first exercise, then it would render the condition of perseverance in holiness absolutely impossible. But we have seen that this is not the meaning of the first promise of eternal life, upon the condition of the first exercise of faith, and therefore it does not render the second promise, upon the second condition, impossible.

I now go on to observe that the first promise does not render the second needless. This many suppose. They say, If God has promised eternal life upon the condition of the first exercise of faith, they see no propriety, occasion, or necessity of his promising salvation upon the condition of persevering in faith and holiness unto the end of life. For the first condition renders salvation absolutely certain; and when a man knows that

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his salvation is absolutely certain, why should he trouble himself about obedience, or persevering in holiness? This condition is needless. Thus the first promise is supposed to supersede the second, because the first promise renders salvation absolutely certain.

Now let us consider whether, on this account, the second promise, on the second condition, be entirely needless and unmeaning. Here then it is plain that it is not; for this single reason, that the certainty of the end does not destroy the necessity of the means to bring it about. It is true, the first exercise of holiness does render the end, that is salvation, absolutely certain; but this certainty does not destroy the necessity of the means to attain this end. God promised Abraham, that his seed should possess the land of Canaan, and he promised to afford them all necessary aid and assistance to carry them thither; but this promise did not render the exertions of Abraham's seed unnecessary in order to arrive at their promised inheritance. God promised that Judah should return from their long captivity in Babylon, but this promise did not render their prayers and exertions needless, in order to enjoy their ancient city and religious privileges. But on the other hand, in those instances, the certainty of the end established the necessity of the means to bring it to pass; for the end was to be brought about by means, and these were as necessary as the end. Just so in the case before us; the first promise is so far from rendering the second needless, that it renders it absolutely necessary.

But we must still inquire, whether the second condition and promise does not destroy the first. The second condition and promise is, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved;" which implies that he that endureth not to the end shall be lost. How, some may ask, is this consistent with the first promise and condition, that he that believes shall certainly be saved? Does not this last promise destroy the certainty of the first? Or does it not necessarily suppose, that a man who has once believed, may, notwithstanding his first faith, be finally lost? I answer, No. For the first exercise of faith is, by the promise, connected with a promise of perseverance in holiness unto eternal life. The first exercise of faith renders the salvation of the believer sure, in a certain way; that is, the way of perseverance in holiness. And if a man is to be saved in a certain way, then it is very consistent to say that he will not be saved in any other way. Or, in other words, if a man is to be saved in the way of perseverance in holiness, it may be properly and safely said, that he will not be saved, unless he does persevere in holiness unto the end of life.

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IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the promise of salvation made to believers upon their first exercise of faith, be consistent with the promise of salvation made upon the condition of their perseverance in faith and holiness, then they are as really in a state of probation as they were before they first believed. The certainty of their salvation rests upon a ground that does not put them out of a state of probation. The rank Antinomians, who maintain that all the elect, or true believers, were justified from eternity, maintain that they are not in a state of probation in this world. They say that their election made their salvation certain, and this certainty is inconsistent with being on trial, or in a state of probation. But though it be certain that all the elect shall be saved, yet their salvation is conditional. God promises them salvation upon two conditions. One is, that they cordially believe the gospel, and the other is, that they persevere in the cordial belief of the gospel. Before they believe, they are upon trial or probation, whether they will believe; and after they have once believed, they are upon trial or probation, whether they will persevere in believing. So that they are as much in a state of trial or probation after they have believed, as they were before; and as much as all other men are in a state of trial or probation. Though Christ was God's first elect, yet he was in a state of trial or probation. His reward was conditional; for it depended upon his perfect and persevering obedience to his Father, though his Father had promised to hold his hand, direct his steps, and carry him through the whole course of his obedience and sufferings. The security of the condition, however, did not destroy his probationary state. He was tried as much as any of his followers, and as truly conquered his enemies, and surmounted all obstacles thrown in the way of obedience, as any of the modern or ancient saints. Accordingly he was rewarded for his persevering fidelity. This he pleads before his Father as the ground of his receiving the promised reward. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Believers now stand connected with Christ, and because he lives, they shall live; because he persevered, they shall persevere; because he overcame, they shall overcome; and because he is rewarded, they shall be rewarded. Their state resembles his

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while on earth, and their future state shall be like his in heaven. He was in a state of probation, and they are now in a state of probation. He fulfilled the condition upon which his future blessedness was promised, and they will fulfil the condition upon which their future blessedness is promised. But they are still in a state of probation as much as he was before his ascension into heaven. As the certainty of Christ's perseverance in duty to his Father was consistent with his being in a state of probation, so the certainty of believers' persevering in faith is consistent with their being in a state of probation, as long as they continue this side of the grave. Their salvation, though certain, is conditional; and so long as it is conditional, they are upon trial.

2. Since saints are to be saved in the way of perseverance in holiness, there is a propriety in their praying for pardon or justification upon the terms of the gospel, as long as they live. It has often been asked whether saints have any reason to pray for the pardon of their sins, seeing they have been once pardoned or justified, upon their first exercise of faith? And at first view, it would seem there is no reason why they should pray for the pardon of their sins, which has already been granted. Gross Antinomians, who believe that all believers were pardoned or justified from eternity, do actually maintain that there is no reason why believers should ever pray for pardon or justification. They say that good works can neither promote nor hinder the salvation of any true believer, or one of the elect. Dr. Gill maintained that the elect were justified from eternity, and that no man is justified by faith, nor condemned for the want of it. There are such Antinomians now in England, and some in the United States. I have read their sentiments. I speak from knowledge and not from hearsay. Not a few, who maintain the doctrine of justification by faith alone, are unable to see the consistency of this important truth with the conditions of salvation proposed in the gospel. And this has led them to hold, that there are no conditions of salvation proposed in the gospel, and of course, that there is no reason why believers should pray for pardon, either before or after they have once believed. But when we consider, that believers are to be pardoned and saved, on the ground of perseverance in faith, holiness and obedience, we may easily see why saints should continue to pray for pardon, justification and salvation as long as they live. According to the gospel, pardon or justification is not of the nature of *indulgence*. The pope of Rome grants indulgences to commit sins beforehand, or pardons sins before they are committed. But God does not, in justifying believers, grant them an indulgence to sin afterwards, or pardon

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any of their sins before they are committed. The justification of believers is conditional, and does not become complete and final, until they cease to sin. Perseverance in repentance and prayer is necessary as long as believers persevere in sin and moral imperfection. Job's three friends were undoubtedly good men, but they sinfully erred in respect to his character, and in respect to God's design in afflicting him. God, therefore, required them to repent, and seek for pardon, through the intercession of Job. David often sinned, and often prayed for the pardon of his sins. The fifty-first psalm is a penitential prayer for forgiveness of sin. And in another psalm he prays that God would pardon his iniquity, because it was great. The Lord's prayer was designed for the use of all his sincere followers, and requires them to pray every day for the forgiveness of their daily sins. Repentance and prayer are the conditions of pardon; believers, therefore, must continue to repent and pray, as long as they continue to sin. Their future forgiveness of future sins, as much depends upon their future faith, repentance and prayer, as their first forgiveness depended upon their first faith, repentance and prayer. God continues to pardon or justify believers upon precisely the same condition upon which he first pardoned and justified them.

3. Since God's first promise of salvation to believers, upon their first exercise of faith, is perfectly consistent with his second promise of salvation, upon the condition of persevering in faith, there is no weight in any of the objections usually made by Arminians against the doctrine of saints' perseverance. Most or all of the objections which Arminians make against the doctrine of the perseverance of saints, as maintained by Calvinists, are founded upon what the scripture says of the necessity of saints' persevering in faith and holiness in order to their final salvation. We must allow that both declarations of our Saviour in the text are equally true. The first is, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation." The second is, "But he that endureth to the end, shall be saved." We have shown that these two declarations do not destroy, but strengthen each other. Christ says, "he that believeth hath everlasting life;" that is, he has a title to eternal life, and shall not come into condemnation, because "he shall endure to the end;" that is, persevere in faith and holiness through life. It is now easy to see that there is no weight in any objections which have been made, or can be made, against the Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of saints.

It is objected, that saints are required to persevere in faith and holiness in order to be saved; which implies that they

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may fall away. But this we deny, because Christ has promised that they shall not come into condemnation, or fall away.

It is objected that, if saints do not persevere in holiness, they shall be lost; which implies that they may fall away and be lost. But this we deny, because their perseverance is secured by the promise of Christ. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

It is objected that some believers have actually fallen away, and consequently that others may fall away. We deny that any such instances can be found in the Bible. It is true, that false professors may fall away from their profession. Judas fell away from his profession, but not from his cordial faith in Christ, for he never was a true believer. The way-side hearers, the stony ground hearers, and the thorny ground hearers, fell away, because they never were rooted and grounded in true love and true faith. There were some that apostatized in the apostle's day, but he says they never did belong to the brotherhood or household of faith. There is no evidence in scripture, that any one who had been born of God and become a true believer, ever did finally fall away and perish.

It is objected, that the doctrine of saints' perseverance tends to licentiousness. But this objection is groundless, because when it is properly stated and understood, it requires perseverance in holiness as a necessary condition of salvation.

4. If the promise of salvation made to believers upon the first exercise of faith be inseparably connected with the promise of perseverance in holiness, then all true believers may make their calling and election sure. The Arminians and Methodists, who maintain that true believers may fall away, can never obtain assurance that they shall finally be saved. Their doctrine takes away all ground of assurance. Though they know that they have loved God and have believed in Christ, and though they know that they now love God and believe in Christ, yet they do not know and cannot know that they shall persevere in love to God and in faith in Christ; and of course they do not know but they shall be finally lost. Their unscriptural doctrine, that real saints may fall away, deprives them of the benefit and consolation of the full assurance of hope. But Calvinists, who truly love God and believe in Christ, have a solid ground for obtaining a full assurance of final salvation. For if they are conscious that they have once truly loved and believed in Christ, they may certainly know that their first love

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and first faith are inseparably connected with future love and future faith, and that they shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. The ancient saints obtained the full assurance of hope, and spoke the language of full assurance. Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." David could say to God with assurance, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Paul knew, and therefore could say, if he were absent from the body, he should be present with the Lord. All real christians might obtain full assurance of salvation, if they only knew what is true in respect to themselves. It is true of every real christian that he has become united to Christ by that faith which is founded in love; and this first faith is inseparably connected with perseverance in faith, which secures the salvation of his soul. If true believers did but know that they loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, they might have the assurance of hope, and look forward to their future and eternal blessedness without fear or doubt.

5. It appears from what has been said, that it is the duty of all real christians to seek and strive after the full assurance of their title to eternal life. They are entitled to eternal life, and they may know that they are entitled to it. God has enjoined this duty upon them, and pointed out the way in which they may perform it. The apostle Peter, in his second epistle to christians in general, very affectionately and forcibly exhorts them to grow in grace, that they may obtain a full and comfortable assurance of their present holiness and future blessedness. After mentioning the great and precious promises which God had given them, and by which he had purified their hearts, he goes on to say, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." Here the apostle tells christians that if they grow in knowledge and grace, they shall never fall away, but make their calling and election sure. They are certainly bound to grow in knowledge and grace, and of course they are bound

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to attain the full assurance of hope. They have no right to live in darkness and doubt, while they are able to attain full assurance of their gracious state and final salvation. While they are growing in grace, they have a growing evidence that they have been born of God, that they are the children of God, and as children, joint heirs with Christ to future and eternal life. But how little do christians in general seek and strive after the full assurance of hope! They seem to think that full assurance is a mere privilege rather than a duty. It is, indeed, a great blessing, which all christians may attain by the constant and faithful discharge of their duty. Let them keep themselves in the love of God, and add to their faith every other christian grace and virtue, and their hearts will give them confidence towards God, and full assurance of his everlasting favor. Perfect love casts out fear, and gives that light which casts out darkness and doubt.

6. It appears from what has been said, that those christians who do not persevere in their love to God and faith in Christ, have reason to call in question their good estate. All real christians, who have sincerely loved God, and cordially believed in Christ, persevere in their love, faith, and obedience, which affords them a growing evidence of their gracious state, and title to eternal life. But those who do not persevere in their first supposed love, faith, and obedience, have ground to fear that they never had any true love to God, or true faith in Christ, or ever performed the least act of true obedience to any divine command. Their want of perseverance in love, faith, and obedience, is as strong an evidence against them, as the perseverance of real christians is an evidence in their favor. Christ has said that those who endure shall be saved, which is implicitly saying that those who do not endure shall be lost. There have been many nominal christians in the world, who have not endured, and have not been saved. Christ repeatedly checked those who were forward to profess their faith and obedience, while they had no true love to him. As doubting christians may remove their doubts by a growing, persevering faith, so doubting sinners may remove their doubts, by their growing, persevering unbelief and disobedience. How many lose their first love, first faith, and first zeal! All such may know that they have deceived themselves, and that their last state is worse than their first. Hence it highly concerns all who have assumed the name of christians, to look back upon their past views, and feelings, and conduct, and compare them with their present views, and feelings, and conduct, and determine whether they have been going forward or backward in their christian course. This may be very easy to determine, for

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they have not been stationary, but have actually gone forward or backward. Their faith, and love, and obedience have increased, or decreased. Their love is purer, their faith is stronger, and their obedience is more uniform and sincere; or their love is waxed cold, their faith is wavering, and their obedience is reluctant and inconstant. It is true of all true believers, that they are either growing or declining in religion. And as to nominal christians, they have been continually declining, until they have nearly or quite lost every thing in their views, and feelings, and conduct, which has any appearance of religion. Self examination is very necessary for all real christians, whether they are growing or declining in grace. If they are growing in grace, it will encourage them to press forward after higher attainments in holiness in this life, and higher degrees of happiness in the next. If they are declining in grace, it will reprove them for their negligence, and excite them to greater diligence and activity in duty. And it may have a good effect upon those who have lost their religion, and constrain them to give up their groundless hopes, and lead them to repent and pray acceptably for pardon and salvation. Paul, who was self deceived, discovered his self deception, repented, and prayed, and found mercy. It infinitely concerns all who have deceived themselves to search their hearts, that they may discover their deception, danger, and guilt, and cast themselves upon the sovereign grace of God, by faith in the all sufficient Redeemer.

But are there not many non-professors, who are trusting in their own hearts, and depending upon their own goodness to save them? They are under a strong delusion, and are in imminent danger of destroying themselves for ever. They must put away their evil heart of unbelief, repent of all their self righteousness and self dependence, and cast themselves upon that mercy to which they have no claim, and cry like the poor publican, God be merciful to us sinners, or they will perish for ever.

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SERMON LXX.

PERFECT HOLINESS IN THIS LIFE THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS.

And this also we wish, even your perfection. — 2 Corinthians, xiii. 9

The church in Corinth was a very large and respectable church, while the apostle Paul resided among them; but after he left them, they fell into various disputes, animosities and contentions, through the influence of Judaizing teachers, who led many of them into both theoretical and practical errors. The apostle being informed of their irregularities and errors, wrote to them, in order to reclaim them. And his first epistle had a salutary effect, and produced a partial reformation. Still there were some things that needed to be reformed. He accordingly wrote to them his second epistle, in which he tenderly and affectionately reminds them of their past declension, but intimates that he rejoiced in the prospect of their becoming so completely reformed, that if he should come among them again, he should find nothing to censure. He says, "Now I pray to God, that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection." This was as much as to say, "Though we have power to reprove and censure you for doing wrong, yet we do not desire an opportunity of exercising this power. We pray to God, that ye do no evil, that ye may be strong, and that we may be weak. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. If you do no evil, and act agreeably to your christian profession, you

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will disarm us of our power of reproving and censuring you. And we shall be glad when we are weak, and ye are strong, in this respect. For this is the very thing we wish, even your perfection." And if the apostle was right in his wish, then we may justly conclude,

That it is the duty of christians to be perfectly holy in this life. I shall show,

I. What is meant by their being perfectly holy; and,

II. That it is their duty to be so in this life.

I. I am to show what is meant by saints being perfectly holy.

This is a point concerning which there is a diversity of opinions. Even those who agree in the nature of holiness, do not agree in respect to the perfection of it. But if we can only determine in what the moral imperfection of saints consists, we may easily determine in what their moral perfection consists. For if their moral imperfection consists in the weakness of their holy affections, then their moral perfection must consist in the strength of their holy affections. Or if their moral imperfection consists in the inconstancy of their holy affections, then their moral perfection must consist in the constancy of their holy exercises. Now it is easy to see that their imperfection in holiness cannot consist in the weakness of their holy affections. For their affections never can be perfectly strong, that is, as strong as the divine affections. In this respect, they never can be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. Nor can they be perfect as the angels in heaven are perfect. For they are beings of far greater strength and of more enlarged intellectual powers than men, and capable of exercising much stronger affections than they. So that if perfection in holiness consists in the strength of the affections, it is impossible that saints should ever be perfectly holy, either in this world, or in the world to come. Besides, their affections always are as strong as they can be. When they do love God, they love him as much as they can, in their present circumstances, and with their present views. And when they love any other holy object, they love it as much as they can love it, for the time being. Men always love, or hate, with all their heart, and with all their mind, and with all their strength, or to the utmost of their capacities. Saints being perfectly holy, therefore, does not mean that their holy affections are equal in strength, vigor, or fervency, to the affections of God, or of angels, or of the spirits of just men made perfect. And from this it follows, that their perfection in holiness must consist in the *constancy* of their holy affections. If they should constantly and uninterruptedly exercise holy affections, they would be absolutely perfect in holiness, and entirely free from sin. If they should constantly, without any

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interruption, keep themselves in the love of God, and never indulge one selfish or unholy affection, they would be perfectly holy, in the sense of the text, and in the sense of this discourse. I now proceed to show,

II. That it is their duty to be perfectly holy in this life. And this will appear if we consider,

1. That there is a constant reason for their being holy, and therefore they ought to be constantly holy. The constant reason for their being holy arises from their natural capacity. They are endued with rational and moral powers, which render them capable of holy exercises. They know the difference between holy and unholy exercises, and are capable of feeling their moral obligation to exercise pure, holy, benevolent affections towards all the beings with whom they are concerned, and towards all the objects by which they are surrounded. This knowledge of their duty lays them under constant obligation to do it. It is as right that they should be constantly holy, as that they should ever be holy. Their obligation never ceases; and therefore they are constantly bound to fulfil it. They always have reason to be holy, but never a reason to be unholy. So long, then, as they retain their natural and moral powers, they are under indispensable obligations to be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.

2. The divine law requires christians to be constantly and perfectly holy. The law saith to every one, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." This law, which is founded in the nature of things, never has been and never can be abrogated. It binds christians at all times, and requires them to be constantly holy, or to exercise holy, and none but holy affections. It carries their duty as high as it can be carried; and as high as the duty of angels, or the saints in light. They can do no more than love God with all their heart, and their fellow creatures as themselves. And this the divine law requires of christians at all times, and under all circumstances. If it be the duty of christians to obey the first and fundamental law of God's kingdom, then it is their constant and indispensable duty to be perfectly holy in this life.

3. The gospel, as well as the law, requires of christians, in this life, constant holiness, or sinless perfection. This appears by a multitude of precepts and prohibitions contained in the New Testament. It is difficult and needless to mention them all. But I will cite a number, which are plainly and directly to the purpose.

1. Those precepts which require saints to do every thing

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from love to God, require them to be constantly holy and free from sin. Paul, speaking to the saints at Corinth, says, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Again, he says to them, "Let all your things be done with charity;" that is, with pure, holy love. And to the Colossians he says, "Above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him." And again he says, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men." These divine precepts are universal and unlimited. They require christians to do every thing in love and obedience to God. But to do every thing in such a manner, is to be constantly and perfectly holy. As these precepts admit of no qualification, or exception, they bind christians to maintain constant holiness, or sinless perfection, through the whole course of their lives.

2. Those precepts which enjoin constant obedience upon christians, require them to be perfectly holy and sinless. We find many such injunctions. Christians are required to rejoice in the Lord alway; to rejoice evermore; to pray without ceasing; and to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Constancy in holy affections, and holy obedience, amounts to perfect holiness and freedom from sin. If christians always lived in such a joyful, prayerful, and dutiful frame, they would live perfectly holy and sinless.

3. All those precepts which enjoin universal obedience upon christians, require them to be perfectly holy and conformed to the will of God. Paul, after wishing the perfection of christians, immediately exhorts them to maintain that perfection which he wished them to have. "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." To his christian brethren in Galatia, he says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." He enjoins it on the Philippians to do "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report." Peter, also, in his first epistle to christians in general, says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind; be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy." These precepts are exceeding broad, and extend to every branch

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of a christian's duty; and require him to be perfectly holy in heart and life.

4. All those precepts which require christians to resist all opposition and surmount all difficulties in the path of duty, require them to be perfectly holy and constantly obedient. Christians are required to resist the devil and all his evil suggestions. James says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Peter says, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith." "Wherefore," saith the apostle Paul, "take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby ye may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Christians are required to resist and overcome the world, in every form in which it obstructs their holy and devout life. John says to them, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Paul tells them, "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds." And again he says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." Christians are warned against the men of the world, as well as the things of the world. Our Lord bids his followers, "Beware of men," "beware of false prophets," and "take heed and beware of the Scribes and Pharisees." And the apostles warn christians to beware of false spirits, false teachers, and all who lie in wait to deceive. Christians are urged also to feel and conduct with benevolence and propriety towards their enemies. Christ commands them, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you." The apostle gives a similar exhortation. "Bless, and curse not." "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good." Temporal evils and afflictions are great trials; but christians are required to feel and conduct perfectly right under them. They are exhorted to be patient in tribulation; not to despise chastenings, nor to faint under divine rebukes; nor to think it strange that they are called to fiery trials, but to rejoice under them. In a word, christians are required to feel and act perfectly right, notwithstanding all the assaults of Satan, all the allurements of the world, all the opposition of sinners, and all the trials and troubles which fall to their lot. They are required to feel and conduct according to the law of love, at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances. And this certainly amounts to their

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being required to be perfectly holy and devoted to God, in this life. I may add,

5. That all those passages of scripture, which enjoin it upon christians to put away, mortify, and subdue all sin, require them to be perfectly pious and holy. The gospel abounds with injunctions and admonitions to this purpose. "The grace of God," says the apostle, "that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And Peter says, "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Paul says, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Again he says, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." And again he exhorts the Ephesians, to "put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Thus it appears from the light of nature, from the law of God, and from the gospel of Christ, that christians ought to be perfectly holy, and totally free from sin; which is sinless perfection, in this life. But lest several objections should weaken the conviction of this truth in the minds of some, I will say a few words to remove them.

1. It may be thought that if christians are required to be perfectly holy in this life, then there is no difference between the law and the gospel. The law requires sinless perfection, and for that reason, men could not be saved by it; and if the gospel requires sinless perfection, then it is as difficult to be saved by the gospel, as by the law. Answer. — The law does require sinless perfection, and condemns the transgressor, for the least offence, to eternal destruction; and therefore none can be saved by the law. And it is equally true, that the gospel requires sinless perfection, but not as a condition of eternal life. For it makes provision through the atonement of Christ, for the transgressions of believers, and promises forgiveness to their faith and repentance. The law knows no forgiveness, but the gospel does. And, therefore, notwithstanding the law of love binds christians to constant and perfect obedience, and notwithstanding christians violate this law, yet through the gospel, they may be forgiven and saved. So that perfection of holiness is a *duty* under the gospel, though not a *condition* of pardon and acceptance with God.

2. It may be said, it is not the will of God that any should be perfectly holy, in this life. There is no man that liveth, and

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sinneth not. If any man say he hath no sin, he deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him. How then can it be the duty of christians to be perfect, when God has determined, that they shall not be so? Answer. — Our duty does not depend upon the divine decrees. It arises from the nature of things, and the preceptive will of God. It was decreed that angels should fall; but it was their duty to persevere in sinless perfection. It was decreed that Adam should fall; but it was his duty to continue perfectly holy and innocent. It was decreed that every christian shall be just as imperfect as he is; but it is his duty to be free from all moral imperfection. If it be the duty of christians to grow in grace, and to be any more holy than they are at present, then it is equally their duty to sin no more, and to be perfectly holy. So that God's determination, that christians shall not reach absolute perfection in this life, is no obstruction, nor objection, to the duty of becoming perfectly holy.

3. It may be said, that it is the opinion of some good men, that christians are not bound to be perfectly holy, in this life. The Assembly of divines say, "No mere man since the fall is able in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed." Answer. — If this means that christians are *morally* unable, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, it is true; but is no objection against their being *naturally* able, and *bound* to pay perfect obedience to the divine commands. It is probable those divines meant to guard against the notion of some in their day, as well as in this, who professed to be perfectly holy. But if they did not mean a moral inability, in distinction from a natural inability to be perfectly holy, their opinion was unscriptural and unsound, and ought to be rejected.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If christians ought to be perfectly holy in this life, then they are much more sinful than they appear to be in the eyes of the world. The world see that they fall below that perfection of holiness which the gospel requires, and even below that perfection which their profession requires. Their external conduct shows the imperfection of their hearts. But their external conduct is better than their internal exercises, which they often conceal, and never fully exhibit. They often externally obey the divine commands, while they are far from feeling that pure love to God and man, which they ought to feel. So that the external imperfection, which the world see and condemn, is a small part of that imperfection, which they see and lament in

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their own hearts; and a much smaller part of that imperfection, which God sees and condemns. The apostle John says, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Christians have a spiritual discerning of spiritual things, and can easily discern the difference between selfishness and benevolence, or between right and wrong affections in their own hearts. And when they discover wrong affections, they feel them to be a criminal imperfection, whether they express them externally or not; and whether their external conduct, which flows from their sinful affections, meets the approbation or disapprobation of the world. They often condemn themselves for that, which the world approve and admire. They make the law of God the standard of their internal motives as well as of their external actions. And so far as their hearts fall short of this infallible standard, they judge and condemn themselves, as sinfully imperfect.

2. If it be the duty of christians to be perfectly holy, then they are never satisfied with their present attainments in holiness. They appear to them low, in comparison with the standard of perfection, and even in comparison with the apparent attainment of others. They are apt to think others better than themselves, and that they are less than the least of all real saints, though not of all professors. They may know that they externally conduct better than some who name the name of Christ. But they do not know, and are not apt to think, that they are better than exemplary professors. They can hardly think that sincere christians fall so far below the standard of perfection as they are conscious they do. They are greatly dissatisfied with their present imperfect views and exercises, and desire to approach nearer and nearer to that perfection which God requires. How often does David lament his imperfection, and pray for quickening grace, in the one hundred and nineteenth psalm? He says, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word." And soon after he says, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Paul acknowledges his imperfection, and resolves to press forward after higher and higher attainments in grace. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before; I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." All who have the love of God in them, not only desire to keep themselves in the love of God, but desire larger

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measures of that love, or to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They ardently desire to go from one degree of grace to another, until they arrive at the full stature of perfect men.

3. If it is the duty of christians to be perfectly holy, then the best christians are the most sensibly burdened with sin. Not because they have the most sin, but because they hate sin the most, and feel it to be their greatest burden. The more holy christians are, they more they attend to the exercises of their hearts, and the more clearly they distinguish sin from holiness, and the more they loathe and abhor themselves for the least sin, in thought, word and deed. Accordingly, we find the best of men most bitterly complaining of the burden of sin. Job, in a clear view of God and himself, cries out, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." David complains most bitterly of the burden of sin. He cries, "Mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long." When Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and heard the seraphim crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory," he exclaimed, "Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." A clear view of the divine holiness filled the prophet with a deep sense of his own unholiness and vileness, which sunk him in self reproach and self abasement. The apostle Paul, who arrived as near to perfection as any man ever did in this life, appears to have been the most sensibly burdened with sin, in the view of the purity and strictness of the divine law, which he fell short of perfectly obeying. He expresses his feelings upon this subject with the utmost freedom. "And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that I do." "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The best of saints are the most disposed to compare their hearts with the strictness and spirituality of

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the divine law, which discovers their great imperfection, and fills them with the deepest sense of the burden of sin.

4. If christians ought to be perfectly holy, then they grow in humiliation, more than in any other christian grace. All their other attainments in holiness, unitedly tend to produce humiliation and self abasement. The clearer views they have of God, of Christ, of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and of the holiness and blessedness of heaven, the clearer views they have of their great imperfection in divine knowledge, in love to God and man, and in the discharge of every duty. Though they may have joyful and grateful views of God and divine things, yet these very views lead to humiliation and self abasement, as they serve to show them how much they rob God of his glory, and themselves of peace and happiness. For nothing but their sinful imperfections cause God to withdraw his gracious influences, and the manifestations of his love. They know by happy experience, that so long as they dwell in love, they dwell in God, and God in them; and that whenever they draw near to God, God draws near to them. Though they do really grow in grace, and make some advances towards perfection, yet they find no occasion of boasting of their spiritual attainments; but much occasion of humiliation and self condemnation, that they grow so slowly, and approach no nearer to what God requires them to be, and they desire to be. There is no christian grace they find more occasion to exercise, and none which they more habitually exercise, than humiliation and self abasement.

5. If christians ought to be perfectly holy, then they are the most inconsistent persons in the world. They sometimes feel their obligation to be perfect, and sometimes they are totally insensible of it. They sometimes do their duty, and sometimes neglect it. They sometimes see God and are pleased, and they sometimes see him and are displeased. They sometimes rejoice that the Lord reigns, and they sometimes distrust his care and faithfulness, and murmur and complain. They sometimes go forward in their religious course, and they sometimes go backward. This inconsistency they are more or less guilty of every day, which they cannot justify, but feel constrained to condemn; and this lays a foundation for a spiritual conflict or warfare in their minds; such as Paul experienced, when he said, "That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I." They never feel safe from unholy exercises, which puts them in a state of constant watching and guarding against wrong affections creeping into their hearts, and obliges them to keep their hearts with all diligence.

6. If christians ought to be perfectly holy, and yet are so inconsistent as not to be perfectly holy; then this inconsistency is no counter evidence of their being in a state of grace. Real

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christians often construe it so. A sense of their inconsistency clouds their minds, and weakens their former hopes of their gracious state, and sometimes reduces them to the borders of despair, not only for days, but for weeks, and months, and even for years. Some who appear to be, and are eminent christians, have suffered their interrupted and inconsistent exercises to plunge them into a most gloomy and disconsolate state. This is wrong, as David says he was, when his "soul refused to be comforted." This inconsistency of contradictory exercises is peculiar to christians, and one thing which distinguishes them from sinners; and therefore, instead of being an evidence against them, is an evidence in their favor. They ought to ask why it is thus with them. And the true answer is, because they are imperfect christians, as all christians are; and inconsistent christians, as all christians are. The misconstruing this evidence of grace, is very hurtful to sincere professors, as it disturbs their peace, weakens their hands, and reproaches religion. But this mistake, probably, has a greater and more unhappy effect upon sincere non-professors, and prevents their performing a very important duty for a long time. How many such persons have entertained a well grounded hope of a renovation of heart, and have acknowledged that they have entertained a hope of being reconciled to God, but yet have found such an inconsistency in their views and feelings at different times, that they continue to live in doubt, and in neglect of duty! They are entreated to consider the nature of christian perfection, which is always attended with more or less inconstancy and inconsistency, and draw a just conclusion from it. Or else they never will, and never can, obey Christ's new and dying command.

7. If the imperfection of christians consists in the inconstancy of their holy affections, then sinners are perfectly sinful; for they constantly exercise selfish and sinful affections. Every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is evil, and only evil continually. They never have the love of God in them. All their moral exercises are a constant, uninterrupted train of sinful exercises, which are so many transgressions of the law of God. What an amazing train! How must they appear in the sight of God! How fast are they treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath! What is their delay of duty, but an act of continued rebellion? What saves them from complete destruction, but abused mercy? What excuse can they have, for not becoming christians? God commands, Christ calls, the church invites, their own interest for eternity calls imperatively. Let them hear these solemn calls, obey, and live.

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SERMON LXXI.

THE GROWTH OF GRACE.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Peter, iii. 18.

The apostles were solicitous, not only to convert men to the belief and profession of Christianity, but to build them up in their most holy faith. They often visited the churches which they had planted, to look into their state, and to rectify whatever they found amiss in their sentiments or practice. And when they could not consistently visit them, they frequently wrote them very friendly and occasional epistles, in which they meant to instruct them in some particular doctrines, or warn them against some particular errors, or solve some particular cases of conscience, or exhort them to constancy and perseverance in their christian course. But Peter, in writing to christians in general, seems to have but one great object in view, and that is, to urge upon them the importance of their growing in grace, which would afford them the best support under their trials, and the best security against all the snares and seductions of their spiritual enemies. The conclusion of this last epistle is agreeable to the whole tenor of both. "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Christians are still in a state of moral imperfection, and exposed to the subtile devices of the great adversary of their souls, and to the snares and temptations of the present evil world. The injunction in the text applies with all its force, to the feeble and humble followers of Christ,

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at this day. They need to make continual advances in grace, and in that knowledge which is conducive to their spiritual strength and edification. There is the same connection between knowledge and grace, that there is between means and ends. It is not to be expected that christians will grow in grace, unless they grow in the knowledge of Christ, as he is revealed in the gospel. This, therefore, will be the leading sentiment in the present discourse:

That christians must grow in knowledge, in order to grow in grace. I shall,

I. Consider what is meant by their growing in grace.

II. Consider why they must grow in knowledge in order to grow in grace.

III. Show the importance of their growing in both these respects.

I. We are to consider what is meant by their growing in grace. The word grace is used in various senses in scripture. It sometimes signifies the love of God to all mankind in sending his Son to die for them. It sometimes signifies his peculiar love to those whom he renews and sanctifies by the influences of his Holy Spirit. And it sometimes signifies the love, the faith, the repentance, and all the holy affections of true believers or real christians. In this sense, the apostle uses the word grace in the text. He supposes that all who have cordially embraced the gospel, have begun to live in the exercise of holy affections, and he exhorts them to grow in grace and press forward in their christian course. The question now is, How shall they perform this duty? This leads me to say,

1. They must exercise grace more constantly. It is generally and justly supposed that the best of christians, in their present state of imperfection, are not always in the actual exercise of grace. Whether there can be any such thing as grace, without exercise, I shall not stand to consider; but supposing the common opinion to be true, that christians are not always in the exercise of grace, it must be allowed that they ought to exercise grace more constantly; which is actually growing in grace. For the more constantly and uninterruptedly they exercise purely holy affections, the more they conform to the divine will, and do really advance in the divine life. They follow the example of the apostle Paul, while growing in grace and pressing forward towards the mark of sinless perfection. So far as they fail in the constancy of their gracious exercises, just so far they fall short of that moral perfection, which is their indispensable duty. If they let their thoughts wander with the fool's eyes to the ends of the earth, their gracious affections will certainly be interrupted, and vain thoughts and evil affections will

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creep into their hearts. Some christians, who are circumspect and watchful, and keep their hearts with diligence, have many more right affections than others, who are in a low and declining state of religion. They carry about with them the spirit of the gospel, and pursue their secular concerns, as well as perform their religious duties, with gracious sincerity. Whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, they mean to do all to the glory of God. They live as seeing Him who is invisible, and endeavor to keep themselves in the fear of the Lord all the day long. This is what all christians ought to do, to grow in grace, and make progress in a holy and devout life.

2. Uniformity, as well as constancy, is implied in growing in grace. By uniformity is meant the the exercise of all the various christian graces. These are numerous, according to the vast variety of objects with which christians are surrounded, and the great variety of circumstances in which they are placed. Want of uniformity is a very great and common imperfection of christians. They are often like Ephraim, "a cake not turned." They are sound in some respects, but unsound in other respects. Their beauties are mixed with blemishes. They may be devout in their religious performances, but not so serious and circumspect in their common intercourse with the world. They may be very conscientious in some points, but more lax and inconsiderate in matters of equal, or higher importance. Some seem to have more love to God, than to man; while others seem to have more love to man than to God. Some shine in one grace, and some in another; while very few shine in all the beauties of holiness. But Christ was uniform as well as constant in the exercise of every species of holy affections. And his followers ought to have grace for grace, and be as uniform as he was in exercising right affections, on all occasions and under all circumstances. This the apostle Peter plainly intimates is necessary in order to grow in grace. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The more uniform christians become in their holy affections, the more they grow in grace, and the nearer they approach to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Proficiency in one grace will not atone for deficiency in another; and therefore every christian ought to become more and more uniform, as well as constant, in every christian grace. While christians maintain constancy and

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uniformity in their gracious affections, they will increase in fervency and activity in every duty. Their coldness, and backwardness, and unfruitfulness, always arise from the want of constancy and uniformity in their holy exercises. Let them only become constant and uniform in their love to God and man, and they will be pure as God is pure, and completely obey his command, "to grow in grace."

II. We are next to inquire why growth in knowledge is necessary in order to the growth in grace. This necessary connection between grace and knowledge, is plainly intimated in the text. "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." God has always employed knowledge as the most proper means to promote holiness in the hearts of his people. He has given them his written word, and appointed men to feed them with knowledge and understanding. And he has done this for the very purpose of promoting their spiritual edification and growth in grace. Accordingly we read, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Some, however, have thought and said, that knowledge is of little or no advantage to christians, and rather tends to obstruct, than to promote vital piety. It is, therefore, a pertinent and important inquiry, why knowledge is necessary to the spiritual edification of christians. Here it may be observed,

1. That knowledge tends to increase their obligations to grow in grace. The knowledge of duty always increases an obligation to do it. Christ said to those who heard his instructions, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin." The apostle asserts that "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The truth of these declarations is founded upon the tendency of knowledge, to oblige every person to act as well as he knows. The more christians know of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the greater is their obligation to be conformed to his character and will. And could they have a clear, connected, and comprehensive view of all that he has done, and will do, for the glory of God, the salvation of sinners and the good of the universe, their obligations to grow in grace would be in exact proportion to their extensive knowledge. All christians know by their own experience, the tendency of knowledge to increase their moral obligation to duty. The more knowledge they receive from the word or the provi-

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dence of God, the more they feel morally bound to live in the constant exercise of grace. Peter, Paul, and the other apostles, were under higher obligations to grow in grace than common christians, because they had higher degrees of knowledge. All the inhabitants of heaven are under higher obligations to make continual advances in holiness, than any of the saints here on earth, because they dwell in superior light. As knowledge, therefore, has a direct tendency to increase the obligations of christians to perfect holiness in the fear of God, so it is necessary that they should grow in knowledge, in order to grow in grace.

2. Divine knowledge not only increases the obligations of christians to grow in grace, but actually increases the holiness of all their holy affections. One exercise of love to God may be more holy than another. The degree of holiness in every exercise of love to God, is always in proportion to the light, or knowledge, which the person has at the time of exercising that particular grace. A christian has a much clearer and more extensive view of God at one time than at another, and his love is always virtuous in exact proportion to the degrees of his present knowledge. One exercise of faith is more virtuous than another, because the believer may have much greater knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ at one time than he has at another. The same holds true of submission, joy, gratitude, and every other christian grace. The virtue of every holy affection bears a due proportion to the magnitude of the object towards which it is exercised. It is more virtuous to love Christ than to love a friend of Christ, because he is a far greater and nobler object than any individual christian. It is more virtuous to love God than to love any created being, because he is a far greater and nobler object than any created intelligence. The celebrated Howard, who spent his property and his life in relieving the objects of charity in Britain and in various other parts of Europe, was a man of benevolence, and his benevolence was in proportion to his knowledge. As he had a far more extensive view of the miseries of mankind than christians in general, so his exercises of kindness and compassion were much more virtuous than theirs, towards similar objects. God is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; and of consequenee, there is more virtue in one exercise of his benevolence towards mankind, than in all the benevolent exercises of all his benevolent creatures. They never have had, and never will have, such a full and perfect view of the whole creation, as he has every moment; and their virtue can never exceed their knowledge, but only increase as that increases. Suppose an American prisoner should be converted

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in Algiers, and have no opportunity to read the Bible, to hear a sermon, or to converse with a single christian, after his conversion; he might, by meditation and prayer, grow in grace all his days till he died; but he could not grow in grace so fast, as if he enjoyed all the means of light and instruction which he once enjoyed in his native land. He might, indeed, have as many holy exercises as if he had been planted in the house of the Lord, and lived in the circle of the most lively christians; but his holy exercises would terminate upon fewer and less important objects than theirs, and consequently be much less virtuous. The more real christians become acquainted with their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the better they understand the great and essential truths of the gospel, and the more they attend to the great things which God has done, is doing, and has promised to do, to accomplish the glorious design of redeeming love, the more gracious exercises they will probably have; and it is certain that the virtue of all their gracious exercises will increase, as their knowledge increases. The virtue of their desires to promote the glory of God, will be in proportion to their knowledge of God. The virtue of their desires for the spread of the gospel, will be in proportion to their knowledge of the truths and importance of the gospel. The virtue of their desires for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, will be in proportion to their knowledge of the present and promised extent of his kingdom, and all the good contained in it. In a word, the increase of knowledge will tend to increase both the number and the virtue of all their holy affections; and for this reason, it was necessary that they should grow in knowledge, in order to grow in grace.

III. It now remains to show the importance of their growing in both these respects. Christians do not generally realize the importance of growing in grace, and making continual advances in holiness. Many imagine that they may safely rest satisfied with the lowest degree of grace, because this will certainly secure their final salvation. But though the weakest christians shall eventually obtain eternal life, yet it is of very great importance that true believers should become strong in faith, and every other christian grace, by using the proper means to obtain this desirable end. Here, then, I would observe,

1. That the honor of religion requires christians to grow in knowledge and grace. Though the men of the world are disposed to hate and despise religion, yet they are constrained to respect it in those professors who appear to be both knowing and growing christians. When they find professors who are deficient in knowledge, they ascribe all their apparent sanctity to ignorance, superstition or enthusiasm. Or when they find

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professors whose knowledge surpasses their apparent sanctity, they then ascribe all their apparent religion to hypocrisy. But when they find christians who understand the gospel, and are able to give a reason of the hope that is within them, they are constrained to believe and to acknowledge, that their religion is a divine reality. Grace adorns knowledge, and knowledge adorns grace; and both united highly recommend true religion to the world. No man can despise knowledge united with grace, nor despise grace united with knowledge. It was knowledge that recommended the piety of Christ himself, and commanded the respect and admiration of his enemies. They exclaimed, "How knoweth this man letters!" They saw his perfect holiness united with his profound knowledge of those scriptures which they allowed to be of divine inspiration; and this evidence of the truth and importance of his religion they could not despise nor resist. While the followers of Christ increase in spiritual knowledge and gracious affections, their good cannot be evil spoken of. They shine as lights in the world, and lead others to glorify their Father who is in heaven. They adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, which reflects great honor upon their religion, and carries conviction to the consciences of sinners, that they are guilty of inexcusable folly as well as sin, in neglecting the one thing needful. Besides,

2. It is of great importance that christians should grow both in knowledge and in grace, not only on the account of others, but on their own account. For in the first place, their growth in these respects will be the most effectual security against the gross and dangerous errors to which they are continually exposed in their present imperfect state. It is a good thing that the understanding be enlightened with knowledge, and the heart be established with grace. Those who have a clear and extensive knowledge of the gospel, can easily distinguish its great and fundamental doctrines from every false sentiment and fatal error. Scoffers and deceivers early appeared in the christian church, who wrested the scriptures unto their own destruction. And it is in particular reference to such men, that the apostle Peter exhorts christians to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "lest they should be led away with the error of the wicked, and fall from their own steadfastness." Knowledge and grace united, enable christians to detect, expose and reject the various errors which the enemies of the gospel are zealous and artful in propagating. While true believers clearly understand, and faithfully practice their own religion, they are able to meet and refute every false doctrine, which may be proposed and recommended to their belief. This the apostle John suggests to

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those christians who were exposed to fatal errors in his day. "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that anti-christ shall come, even now are there many anti-christs; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye *know* all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth; but because *ye know it*, and that no lie is of the truth." It is as important and necessary now that christians should grow in knowledge as well as grace, to guard themselves and others against those who lie in wait to deceive. Christians never had a louder call to grow in knowledge and grace, that they may be able to contend earnestly and successfully for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. They are surrounded by false teachers, who are zealously endeavoring by art and subtilty, to bring in damnable heresies; and nothing but a zeal according to knowledge will prepare them to discover and refute such fatal errors, and to repel the attacks of all their spiritual enemies.

Growth in knowledge and grace will happily tend, in the second place, to remove darkness and doubts from the minds of christians. They often meet with these inward trials, which greatly depress their spirits and enfeeble their exertions, as well as disturb their peace and comfort. Grace is the evidence of grace, and knowledge discovers this evidence. It is always owing to some kind of ignorance, that real christians are involved in darkness and doubts, respecting their good estate. But by growing in knowledge and grace, they will take the proper and effectual method to dissipate all the clouds which hang over their minds, and to regain that peace which the world cannot give nor take away. Declining christians may expect to be troubled with darkness and perplexity of mind, and the fiery darts of the great accuser of the brethren, because they lay themselves open to both external and internal temptations, and provoke God to withdraw his Spirit and the light of his countenance from them. This he threatens to every backslider. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." But repenting, returning, growing saints may confidently hope that God will graciously return to them, and give them the joy of his salvation.

Farthermore, growth in knowledge and grace will prepare

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christians for the delightful and acceptable performance of every duty. While they are declining in religion, and their hearts are departing from God, they are apt to stand and hesitate, and try to reason themselves into doubts, about both the revealed and providential will of God. They endeavor to excuse themselves for the neglect of disagreeable and self denying duties, because they do not see their way clear to perform them. But when they grow in knowledge and grace, they intuitively see what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, which they ought to follow. Hence says Solomon, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand." And again, "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment." And again, "The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way." This Solomon knew, by happy experience; for while he was growing in knowledge and grace, he prayed for a wise and understanding heart, and his request was abundantly answered. In consequence of having such a heart, he found less difficulty in knowing, and less reluctance in doing his duty. Growing saints are ready to hear the voice of God in his word and providence, and to run in the way of his commandments, with peculiar pleasure and delight. And the more readily they discern, and the more cheerfully they perform the various duties devolved upon them, the more sincere and acceptable are all their services in the sight of God.

It is, finally, of great importance that christians should make continual advances in knowledge and grace, to prepare them for the closing scene of life. They are every day drawing nearer and nearer to the time of their decease, when they must leave this world, and go the way of all the earth. If they neglect to improve their minds in knowledge, and their hearts in holiness, they may expect to live in bondage, and die in darkness and distress; for christians commonly die very much as they live. But if they make it their business to perfect holiness in the fear of God, and to go from strength to strength in their journey towards heaven, they may humbly hope to triumph over death and the grave, and be able to say, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" It appears from the sacred history of growing saints, that their hopes and prospects grew brighter and brighter, the nearer they approached to the confines of death and eternity. Hear the last words of David. "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." Hear also the language of Paul, whose growth in grace enabled him to say: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good

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fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." The more christians grow in knowledge and grace, the better they are prepared to perform their last great act on the stage of life, to the glory of God, to the honor of religion, to their own joy, and to the benefit and consolation of those whom they leave behind.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If knowledge be necessary to promote the growth of grace, then the most instructive preaching must be the most profitable. Many are fond of making a distinction between sentimental and practical preaching, and consider the latter as much more useful than the former. They insinuate that christians at this day do not need to be instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, but only to be quickened and animated to the practice of the duties of religion and morality. But there is reason to believe that saints as well as sinners, at this day, stand in great need of being instructed in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This knowledge lies at the foundation of all true devotion, and true devotion lies at the foundation of all practical piety and christian morality. The great and essential truths of the gospel feed and nourish a holy heart, and directly tend to promote every christian grace and moral virtue. And so far as divine truth tends to promote holiness of heart, just so far it equally tends to promote holiness of life. Christ was a sentimental preacher. In his sermon on the mount, he explained and enforced the great doctrine of disinterested love, which distinguishes all true religion from false, and strikes at the root of some of the most dangerous errors, not only of the Scribes and Pharisees, but of professing christians at the present day. Paul, the first and great apostle of the Gentiles, tells them, that he determined to know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. In his epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Hebrews, we find that, in order to promote the growth of grace in true believers, he dwells abundantly upon the great and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. And he rejoiced in the thought, that he had not shunned to declare all the counsel of God, nor kept back any thing that was profitable in his preaching. It is sentimental and instructive preaching, that is best suited to quicken, comfort and reprove real saints, and to undeceive self righteous and self deceived hypocrites. One reason why so many prefer what they call practical preaching

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to sentimental, is because they do not love the soul humbling, and self denying doctrines of the gospel. They hate to hear preachers explain and inculcate the doctrines of divine decrees, of divine sovereignty, of divine agency, of special grace, and of the continued influence of the Holy Spirit in the performance of every duty. They are much better pleased to hear discourses upon external duties, than upon internal graces. But though sentimental preaching be not the most pleasing and popular, it is the most necessary and profitable. This appears to be true, by universal observation and experience. If we search the history of the church, from Christ's day to the present time, we shall find that devotional and practical piety has always flourished the most, under the most sentimental and instructive preaching.

2. If religious knowledge be conducive to the growth of religious affections, then that religious conversation among christians is the most useful, which is the most instructive. They should often speak one to another upon religious subjects, and endeavor to promote their mutual edification and growth in grace. But they too often converse without much edification or benefit, because they do not aim at giving or receiving instruction. If their conversation turn principally upon the general stupidity of sinners, or the general coldness of professors, or the great corruption, obstinacy and deceitfulness of their own hearts, it rather tends to nourish spiritual pride and self complacency, than any truly gracious affections. But if they converse freely and familiarly upon the peculiar doctrines, duties and promises of the gospel, or upon the peculiar nature of the christian graces, or upon the best means of promoting vital piety, or upon their own obligations to walk worthy of their high and holy calling, they cannot fail of instructing each other, and of promoting their mutual love, zeal and activity in their christian course. Christ always conversed instructively with his disciples and others, and on one occasion he so clearly and fully opened the scriptures, that he made the hearts of those with whom he conversed, to burn with a holy love and joy. This example his friends ought to follow in their free and familiar intercourse together. Indeed they are expressly commanded to avoid all vain and evil speaking, and to converse instructively and profitably on all occasions. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." There are a great many christians who might be extremely useful, if they would aim at edifying, rather than gratifying one another, in talking upon experimental religion. It is their duty freely and frequently to converse together upon

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those glorious truths and objects, which they will delightfully converse upon when they shall meet and dwell together in the kingdom of glory.

3. If divine knowledge has a tendency to promote all the christian graces and virtues, then growing christians have an increasing evidence of their good estate. Our Saviour compares grace in the heart to seed sown in the earth, which springs up and grows very gradually and insensibly. Though the best of christians grow very gradually, yet they carry about with them marks of their increasing holiness, which is an increasing evidence of their being the subjects of a saving change; and of their having gone forward, rather than backward, in their religious life. And if they critically and impartially examine the exercises of their own hearts, they will find more or less of the following effects of the growth of grace.

They will find that they have become more and more sensible of the essential difference between nature and grace. Natural and spiritual affections often put on a similar appearance, when they flow out towards the same objects; which renders it the more difficult to distinguish them from each other. Christians are very liable to put nature for grace, and selfishness for benevolence. When their natural affections unite with their spiritual affections, they are apt to imagine that they are all pure and holy. All these affections, however, are distinguishable, and growing christians learn by experience to distinguish them. The more they increase in knowledge and grace, the more clearly they discern the difference between holy affections, and all others which bear the nearest resemblance to gracious exercises.

By growing in grace, they experience a growing sense of their constant and absolute dependence upon the divine Spirit for all right affections. They lean less to their own understanding, trust less to their own hearts, and depend less upon their own resolutions and strength. They find more sensibly that they are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves, but that their sufficiency is of God. They are convinced by experience that the preparation of their heart and the answer of their tongue is of the Lord. They feel more and more disposed to acknowledge God in all their ways, and to rely upon his gracious aid and influence in every duty.

Their growth in grace gives them a growing sense of their vileness and unworthiness in the sight of God. The more holy they are, the more clearly they discern the beauty of holiness and the deformity and turpitude of sin. As Job grew in grace by passing through the furnace of affliction, he felt an increasing sense of his moral imperfection and vileness in the

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sight of God, to whom he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A clear view of the holiness and majesty of God, had a similar effect upon the holy heart of Isaiah, who said, "Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." The apostle Paul, while pressing forward towards sinless perfection, had a deep and growing sense of his remaining depravity and moral turpitude. "O wretched man that I am!" said he, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death." David often sighed and groaned under a sense of his sin and guilt. Though growing saints really increase in holiness, yet the more grace they have, the more clearly they discern their remaining corruptions, and the more they loathe and abhor themselves for them.

Hence growing christians have a growing sense of the grace of God in their salvation. The more they grow in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the clearer views they have of the divine character, and of the divine law, and of the difference between nature and grace, the more they are astonished at the great things which have been done for them. They are ready to adopt the grateful language of the apostle, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." They are astonished at the grace of God in providing a Saviour, at the grace of Christ in dying for them, and at the grace of the Holy Spirit in subduing their stubborn hearts, and continuing to carry on a work of sanctification in them. The whole scheme of redemption appears to be full of the riches of divine grace.

Hence growing christians have a growing desire to bring forth fruits of righteousness. In whatever station they are fixed, in whatever business they are employed, in whatever condition they are placed, they feel more and more disposed to lay out themselves, to promote the glory of God and the good of mankind. The growth of grace produced this effect in Abraham, who left his country and friends, and offered up his son, for the glory of God; it produced this effect in Moses, who gave up the most promising prospects, in obedience to God, and for the good of his people; and it produced the same effects in the apostles and primitive christians, who suffered the loss of all things, to promote the cause of Christ, and diffuse the blessings of the gospel through the world. Growing christians are not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. They bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

These are some of the happy effects of the growth of grace,

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which all growing christians may discover in their own hearts, and which may give them satisfactory evidence that they are born of God, and are ripening for heaven. But declining christians carry about with them the marks of their declension. Their own hearts testify against them, that they have been cold and backward in duty, that they have abused the word and ordinances of the gospel, and that they have grieved the Holy Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw his gracious and comforting influence from them. Their unhappy and dangerous case calls upon them to remember from whence they are fallen, to repent, and to do their first works. It is their immediate duty to make their calling and election sure, by growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As new born babes, let them desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. God has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Let them wait upon the Lord, and they shall renew their strength; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

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SERMON LXXII.

THE KEEPING OF THE HEART A PRACTICABLE AND IMPORTANT DUTY.

KEEP thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life.—PROV. iv. 23.

SINCE this divine precept enjoins a duty which ought to be universally understood, and universally practiced, I shall endeavor to set it in a clear and instructive light, by showing what it is to keep the heart, how it is to be kept, and why it is to be kept with all diligence.

I. We are to consider what the duty is which is required in the text: "Keep thy heart." This mode of expression plainly intimates that the heart needs to be kept; and the necessity of keeping it as plainly supposes that it is prone to go astray. To prevent it, therefore, from going wrong, is to keep it in the sense of the text. There is no possibility of restraining the heart from all exercises or emotions. As no man who opens his eyes in a clear day, can help perceiving the light, so no man who perceives any visible or invisible object, can help being pleased or displeased, or having some exercises of heart about it. The injunction in the text, therefore, does not require men to lay a total restraint upon their hearts and reduce themselves to stoic insensibility, but only to restrain all their free, voluntary affections from every thing improper and sinful. This implies two things.

1. To keep the heart from all improper objects. Amidst the innumerable objects which surround mankind, some ought to engage their affections at one time, and some at another. They always ought to keep their hearts from all those objects which are not connected with their present duty. But they are ex-

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tremely apt to let their hearts wander from proper to improper objects. How often does it happen on the Sabbath, that they allow the world and the things of the world to engage their affections, instead of fixing their whole hearts upon those religious and divine objects which are inseparably connected with the duties of the day. And when they are engaged in any duty, whether secular or spiritual, how often do their hearts insensibly wander with the fool's eyes to the ends of the earth, and dwell upon things with which their present duty has no connection nor concern. Men have always some duty to perform, and their hearts ought to be engaged in that duty and in nothing else. One thing, therefore, implied in keeping the heart, is to guard it against every object which has no proper connection with present duty. And another thing is,

2. To guard it against all improper affections. While the heart is placed upon proper objects, it may have very improper affections towards them; and this not only may be the case, but is extremely apt to be the case. Men are called to attend to worldly objects, but forbidden to exercise improper affections towards them. Men are called to attend to spiritual and divine objects, but forbidden to exercise improper affections towards them. But how often do they feel improperly towards the world and the things of the world, and towards God and the things of God. They should always keep their hearts from loving hateful objects, and from hating lovely objects. Though it be more difficult, yet it is more important, to keep the heart from improper affections than from improper objects; but the precept in the text requires men to keep their hearts from both these evils. And so long as they do keep their hearts from both improper objects and improper affections, they completely fulfil their duty.

I proceed as proposed,

II. To show how the heart is to be kept.

Since God requires men to keep their hearts at all times and under all circumstances, there must be some way in which they can perform this constant, necessary, and arduous duty. And what has been said in explaining the duty, naturally suggests the proper manner of performing it. The duty consists in restraining the heart from improper objects and improper affections. And to do this it is necessary,

1. That men should always attend to those objects only, with which they are properly concerned. While they are pursuing their secular affairs, they are properly concerned with secular objects. They cannot perform any worldly business without attending to it. The farmer must attend to his farm, the mechanic must attend to his trade, the attorney must attend

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to the law, the preacher must attend to divinity, the statesman must attend to the affairs of state, and all men must attend to their religious and eternal concerns. While their attention is employed upon these and other proper objects, their hearts will be effectually restrained from wandering. The minds of men must be in perpetual exercise in the view of right or wrong objects. But so long as they attend to proper objects, they cannot attend to those which are impertinent or improper. Every man's mind would be perpetually fixed on one single object, were no other object presented to divert his attention. Were one object constantly impressed upon the mind, and but one, it would be as impossible for the mind to think of any other object, as to create a world. And the only reason why any one object which ever possessed our mind does not still possess it, is because other objects have crowded it out and taken its place. We know that an object of surprise will sometimes occupy the whole mind, by excluding all other objects, and throw it into a momentary distraction. The mind cannot be diverted from any object which seizes it, only by the intervention of some other object equally great, novel, or interesting. This we see daily verified in children. Let them be ever so much affected by any particular object, they may be easily composed by almost any thing new or strange. Hence the common use of those trifles, in turning the attention and the tide of affection in children. In this respect men and children are exactly alike. Let any man only attend to proper objects, and his heart will be completely restrained from wandering. The heart cannot move towards any object, without being led by the eye, or the ear, or the understanding, or the imagination, or some other natural faculty of the mind. The natural faculties, in this case, absolutely govern the heart; and it is for this reason that men are properly required to keep their hearts. They have natural power to keep their hearts from all improper objects, because they have natural power to fix them upon proper objects, or those with which their duty is connected. This is plainly intimated by Solomon in the words succeeding the text. "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet; — turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." Let men direct their attention to proper objects, and their affections will infallibly follow their attention. The truth of this every one knows by his own experience. He never found his heart wandering, while his whole attention was engaged in some secular employment or religious duty. There is no danger of the heart's going astray, while the attention is entirely fixed upon those objects which ought to engage

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it. Men may always keep their hearts from all improper objects, by fixing their attention steadily upon proper ones. Though it does not always depend upon their choice what objects shall be presented, and what ideas shall be suggested, by causes from without, yet it does always depend upon their choice, what objects or ideas they shall make the subjects of particular attention. And if they only avoid seeing, hearing, and thinking such things as they have no occasion to see, hear, and think, by fixing their whole attention upon those things which lie in the path of duty, they will effectually keep their hearts from all improper objects. This leads me to observe,

2. That men must pursue the same method to keep their hearts from improper affections, as from improper objects. To keep their hearts from improper objects, they must attend to good ones; and to keep their hearts from improper affections, they must exercise good ones. To keep the heart from every wrong feeling is more difficult, as well as more important, than to keep it from wrong objects. The heart of the sons of men is naturally full of evil, and fully set in them to do evil. They are naturally disposed to exercise sinful affections towards all objects which strike their minds, or engage their attention. Let them be where they will, let them be engaged in what business they will, let them attempt what duties they will, their hearts are prone to go astray, and spoil all their exertions and performances. This evil propensity they ought to restrain, at all times and under all circumstances. But how can they perform this duty? The answer is easy. Let them exercise good affections. As proper objects will always exclude improper ones from the mind, so proper affections will always exclude improper ones from the heart. While men exercise such affections as God requires, they will not be troubled with such as he forbids; and while they keep their hearts in a holy frame, unholy affections cannot intrude or interrupt their virtuous and benevolent feelings. Love will exclude hatred, as well as hatred exclude love. Faith will exclude unbelief, as well as unbelief faith. Repentance will exclude impenitence, as well as impenitence repentance. Submission will exclude opposition, as well as opposition submission. Humility will exclude pride, as well as pride humility. In a word, any gracious exercise will exclude any sinful one; and it is only by the exercise of holiness that the heart can be kept from sin. Hence the propriety and importance of that command given to christians: "Keep yourselves in the love of God." By observing this divine precept, and living in the continual exercise of grace, they may keep their hearts from every sinful affection, in whatever situation they are placed, or with whatever objects they are surrounded. There is one and the same way for all

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men to keep their hearts from improper affections and improper objects. Let them only attend to proper objects, and exercise right affections, and they will never see, nor hear, nor think, nor speak, nor act wrong, while they are passing through the varying scenes of this present evil world. It is now necessary to show, as proposed,

III. The importance of men's keeping their hearts with the greatest care and constancy. This Solomon forcibly enjoins in the text. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The heart lies at the bottom of all human actions, and is the primary source of every thing that is worthy of praise or blame in mankind. All their goodness and all their badness proceeds from the heart, which entirely forms their moral character. And if they will only consider this inseparable connection between their hearts and lives, they must feel the great importance of keeping their hearts with all diligence. For,

1. While they neglect to keep their hearts, all their moral exercises will be sinful. There is no medium between their feeling right or wrong; and, of consequence, they must always exercise either holy, or unholy affections. The moment they neglect to keep their hearts in the love of God, or in the exercise of grace, some sinful affection will succeed, and continue, until they renew their watch, and revive their holy exercises. Those who totally neglect to keep their hearts, live in the continual exercise of selfish and sinful affections. Whether they love or hate, whether they hope or fear, whether they are vain or serious, the whole train of their affections is evil and only evil continually. The same is true of those who habitually keep their hearts, but occasionally neglect them. While they neglect to keep their hearts, whether the term be shorter or longer, all their moral exercises are selfish, and diametrically opposite to the law of love. Since God looketh on the heart, and not on the outward appearance, and requires truth in the inward parts, it is of great importance that men should keep their hearts with all diligence, and suppress all internal motions and affections which are unholy and sinful.

2. While men neglect to keep their hearts, all their thoughts will be sinful. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "The thought of foolishness is sin." All thoughts become sinful, when they are improperly approved or disapproved by the heart. The heart always does have some feeling towards all the thoughts which pass through the mind, whether they are suggested by the visible world, or by Satan, or by the Spirit of God. Though bare thoughts have no moral good or evil in themselves considered, yet in connection with the heart, they all acquire a good or bad moral quality. If

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the heart approve bad thoughts, or disapprove good thoughts, it turns them all into sin. No thought is indifferent after the heart has been exercised about it. This shows the necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence, lest it should pollute the whole train of thoughts, which are rapidly passing through the mind, and render them all vile and odious in the sight of God.

3. While men neglect to keep their hearts, all their words, as well as their thoughts and affections, will be sinful. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." All words are the fruit of the heart. They are first conceived and approved there, before they are uttered. Every idle, impure, false, profane, blasphemous expression comes from within, out of the heart. Men never speak but of choice; so that their hearts are concerned in all their vain or serious conversation. And unless they keep them with all diligence, their whole discourse will be corrupt in the sight of God, however pure, or pleasing, or even edifying it may appear in the view of their fellow creatures. The best as well as the worst language is sinful, when it flows from a corrupt heart. The heart, therefore, must be always kept with the greatest care and attention, lest some sinful word, some injurious expression, some corrupt discourse, proceed out of the mouth.

4. While men neglect to keep their hearts, all their intentions, purposes, or designs, will be evil. They cannot be said to form any design, until the heart has approved and adopted it. Every evil design is first formed in the heart of the projector. The design of building Babel, was first formed in the heart of some Babylonian. The design of destroying the male children of the Hebrews, was first formed in the heart of some Egyptian. The design of cutting off the captive Jews, was first formed in the heart of Haman. All the wars and calamities which have been brought upon the world by ambitious and cruel tyrants, were first conceived, formed and adopted in their hearts, which were totally selfish. And all designs which proceed from this corrupt source, will be sinful, whether they prove injurious or beneficial to the world. While men neglect to keep their hearts from selfishness, every purpose or design they form will be selfish and sinful. This renders the diligent keeping of the heart a constant and important duty.

5. Let men pursue what employments they will, whether public or private, high or low, civil or religious, their daily business will become their daily sin, unless they keep their hearts with all diligence. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." As men's hearts are, so are all their employments. While they neglect their hearts, their plowing and sowing and reaping will be sin; their reading and praying and alms giving will be sin; and every business which employs their hands, or

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heads, or tongues, or pens, will be sin. Unless they keep their hearts right with God, and do every thing to his glory, he will condemn them as wicked and unfaithful servants.

6. Men must keep their hearts with all diligence, lest they abuse all the blessings of providence with which they are favored. They may abuse their health and strength, their intellectual powers and acquired knowledge, their wealth and influence, and all their civil and religious advantages, by placing their supreme affection upon these temporal and inferior objects. And unless they keep their hearts with constant and peculiar care, they will turn all their outward blessings into temptations to sin and aggravations of guilt. They can enjoy no earthly good, or common blessing of providence, with innocence and safety, any longer than they guard their hearts against every selfish affection. They will certainly abuse all their outward enjoyments, unless they keep their hearts under constant restraint.

7. The same diligence in keeping the heart is necessary, to prevent their abusing the troubles and afflictions which they are called to suffer. If they indulge a murmuring or repining spirit under divine corrections, they will become *moral*, as well as *natural* evils. There is never more need of keeping the heart, than under severe and lasting trials. While these continue, the afflicted ought to keep themselves constantly in the love of God, and cheerfully submit to his chastising hand. But if they neglect to guard their hearts, all their sighs and groans and complaints will increase their guilt, and prepare them for greater evils in this life, or in the life to come.

Thus men will continually sin in all their affections, and thoughts, and words, and designs, and employments, and enjoyments, and sufferings, while they neglect to keep their hearts; and, therefore, it is of serious importance that they should keep them with all diligence. There is no time, nor place, nor situation, which does not require the constant performance of this necessary duty. The necessity and obligation of guarding the heart lies upon young and old, saints and sinners, without a single exception.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. It appears from what has been said, that men are never under a natural necessity of sinning. If they will only keep their hearts in the manner which God requires, they will always be secure against every moral evil. Though they may be tempted by the world, by wicked men, and by Satan, yet they may always resist and overcome all these external temptations. Christ was tempted by the world, by Peter, and by the devil; but they could not draw his guarded heart astray. Satan

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tempted Job, by stripping him of every thing which he held most dear and valuable in life; but he kept his heart from rising against God, and sinned not. All men, at all times, are equally able to resist all the snares and temptations with which they are surrounded in this state of trial. Their eyes and ears and imaginations may be assaulted, but while they keep their hearts with due care, they may bid defiance to all their spiritual enemies. These can do them no harm, while they follow that which is good. So long as they set their affections on things above, things below cannot corrupt their hearts. They are just as able to resist all temptations, as they are to keep their hearts with all diligence. Let them only perform this duty, and it will give them the victory over the world and all the things of the world.

2. Since men can guard their hearts against evil, it is easy to see that they can guard their hearts against good. They can no more be laid under a natural necessity of becoming good, than of becoming evil. As they can resist all temptations to sin, so they can resist all motives to embrace the gospel and obey the divine commands. They can shut their eyes, stop their ears, and harden their hearts, against every thing that can be said to them, or done for them, by those who seek to promote their spiritual welfare. They are entirely out of the reach of all the means of grace, which they can abuse to their own ruin. And even the calls and admonitions of divine providence may be lost upon them, and only serve to increase their guilt and ripen them for future and aggravated destruction. This was exemplified by the conduct of those who heard and rejected the preaching of Noah; by those who heard and despised the voice of Moses and the prophets; by those who heard and rejected the counsel of God, under the preaching of Christ and the apostles; and by those at this day who wax worse and worse, under all the instructions and cultivations of the word, the providence, and Spirit of God. Though divine truths may be conveyed to the ears, the understandings and consciences of sinners, yet they can despise or oppose it, and stifle convictions, and obstinately persist in the course to ruin. In a word, they can and will destroy themselves, unless God sees fit to change their hearts by his sovereign and irresistible grace.

3. We learn from what has been said, the imminent danger those are in, who neglect the duty enjoined in the text. This neglect, all sinners are guilty of, in the whole course of their conduct. They never keep their hearts in the manner God requires. They suffer their hearts to rove from object to object, and to fix upon any object which gives them the most pleasure, or promises them the most profit. And though their curiosity,

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or interest, or peculiar circumstances, sometimes constrain them to fix their attention upon spiritual and divine objects, yet they take occasion from them to indulge their selfishness, malignity, or contempt. So that all objects with which they are surrounded, all persons with whom they converse, all favors with which they are indulged, all afflictions with which they are visited, and all the instructions which are poured into their minds, have a natural and powerful tendency to corrupt their hearts, and push them on in the path to destruction. Let them turn their eyes, or fix their attention where they will, they can see and hear and know nothing, but what draws forth their corruptions, and increases both their guilt and danger. While they neglect to keep their hearts, they lie open to all the temptations of Satan, to all the seductions of wicked men, and to all the sin and guilt, which arises from the abuse of all their natural talents, temporal favors, and religious advantages. This awful truth all sinners under genuine conviction clearly see and sensibly feel; which cuts off all hope of salvation, but that which arises from the mere sovereign mercy of God.

4. We learn from what has been said, that none can be sincere in religion who entirely neglect to keep their hearts. Their concern about their external conduct has no religion in it, while they are totally unconcerned about their internal views and feelings. There are many very strict and moral persons, who pay no regard to the motives of their conduct, and lay no restraint upon the corruption of their hearts. They mean to maintain a sober and regular life, while they set their hearts wholly upon the world, and indulge every selfish affection. They mistake morality for religion, and build their hopes of heaven upon a false and sandy foundation. But no external obedience or outward forms of worship, which flow not from a pure and holy heart, partake of the nature of true religion. This our Saviour abundantly taught, in the course of his preaching, to those religious sects who flourished in his day, and were esteemed eminently pious. He told his disciples, in his sermon on the mount, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And he reproved the Scribes and Pharisees themselves in the most severe and solemn manner. "Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee! cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of

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them may be clean also." Real saints keep their hearts with all diligence, but formalists and hypocrites neglect this duty, and expose themselves to be shut out of the kingdom of heaven.

5. We learn from what has been said, the nature of the christian warfare. It consists in watching, guarding, and keeping the heart. All true christians know that they are naturally inclined to attend to improper objects, and to exercise improper affections. They view themselves in an enemy's land, where every person and object will lead them astray, unless they keep their eyes and hearts upon proper objects, and guard against every worldly or selfish affection. Their warfare consists not in attacking their spiritual enemies, but in avoiding or resisting them, by every holy and virtuous exercise. They know, that while they keep their hearts in a holy and heavenly frame, neither Satan nor the whole world can lead them into sin; but if they once allow their eyes, or ears, or hearts, to wander, the veriest trifles are sufficient to make them stumble and fall, and will never fail to produce this fatal effect. In this spiritual warfare, they will find no discharge, nor even respite, until they leave the present evil world, and arrive at that state of rest and perfection which remains for the people of God.

6. This subject teaches christians the importance of their constantly and sincerely attending to all the means of grace, which God has appointed for their spiritual benefit. The reading of the holy scriptures, the hearing of the gospel preached, the commemorating of the death of Christ at his table, the meditating much upon heavenly and divine objects, and especially the frequent and devout calling upon God in secret, private, and public, will have a happy tendency to enliven and increase every religious affection, and keep them from all the paths of the destroyer. All the means of grace were appointed for the edifying and perfecting of the saints, who need such aids to carry them forward in the divine life, and to guard them against the dangers to which they are daily and constantly exposed. This is the only way in which they can have any ground to expect they shall be always able to keep their hearts. By attending to good objects, they will exclude bad ones, and by exercising good affections, they will banish bad ones from their hearts. If they will constantly and faithfully improve the means of grace, God has promised they shall experience these happy effects. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."

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PART XX.

THE SABBATH.

SERMONS LXXIII.—LXXIV.

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SERMON LXXIII.

THE SABBATH A STANDING ORDINANCE.

And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. — Mark, ii. 27.

As our Saviour was passing through the corn fields on the Sabbath, his disciples took the liberty of plucking some of the ears of corn. This was displeasing to the Pharisees, who complained of them to Christ. But instead of condemning, he justified their conduct, by referring to a well known scripture example. He said, "Have ye never read what David did, when he had need and was an hungered, he and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the show bread, which is not lawful to eat, but for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him? And he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." This was a pertinent and full reply to the objection of the Pharisees; and at the same time, implied that God appointed the Sabbath as a standing ordinance, for the benefit of all men in all ages. Accordingly I propose to show,

I. That the Sabbath is a divine ordinance;

II. That it is a standing ordinance; and,

III. That it is appointed for the benefit of all men in all ages.

I. I am to show that the Sabbath is a divine ordinance.

The Sabbath properly signifies a day of rest; but it is only a day of rest from secular employments, and not from religious duties. It is a holy day to be spent in holy services. The duty of observing such a day would never have been discovered by the light of nature. Though the light of nature teaches men

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that they ought to worship their Creator, Preserver and Benefactor, yet it does not teach them that they ought to worship him in a social and public manner, one day in seven. This would not have been their duty, had not God positively appointed the Sabbath as a holy ordinance. Accordingly we find that he did not leave this duty to human discovery, but immediately after he had made man he made also the Sabbath for him. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and *sanctified* it; because that in it he had rested from all his work." This was a divine and sacred ordinance. It was *divine*, as instituted by God; and *sacred*, as it was appointed for a sacred, holy and religious purpose. It is true, the peculiar duties of this holy day are not mentioned in this brief account of its institution. But when it was renewed at Mount Sinai, and placed among the ten commands, the special duties of the day were distinctly enjoined. So that the Sabbath with all its instituted duties, is a divine ordinance, enjoined upon all mankind, for their benefit. "The Sabbath was made *for man*." It was made, by a divine appointment, a holy and sacred day. But since none, who believe the Bible, pretend to call in question the original institution of the Sabbath, it is unnecessary to enlarge upon this head. I proceed therefore to show,

II. That the Sabbath is a standing ordinance, and of perpetual obligation. Many of the divine ordinances before the gospel dispensation were temporary, and ceased when that dispensation commenced. The Passover instituted in Egypt, and the sacrifices, rites and ceremonies instituted at Mount Sinai, were all abolished by the gospel. They were all temporary ordinances. But the Sabbath was designed to be a standing ordinance, from the beginning to the end of the world. This will appear from various considerations.

In the first place, our Saviour says, it "was made for man;" that is, for all men, without exception. The appointment of sacrifices was not made for all men, but only for those men who lived before the death of Christ. The appointment of the Passover was not made for all men, but only for one nation. The rite of circumcision was not appointed for all men, but only for the seed of Abraham, until the promised Messiah appeared. But the Sabbath was made for all men in all ages, because they would always need to rest one day in seven, and to employ it in the special service of God. The very design of the Sabbath argues its perpetuity. There is no reason to be given, why it should be appointed for men in one age or in one part of the world, rather than for all men in all ages and in all places. The

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Sabbath is adapted to the nature and circumstances of all men in their present probationary state; and therefore we may presume it was designed to continue to the end of time.

And this leads me to observe, in the second place, that the Sabbath was not abolished when other positive institutions were set aside. The apostle expressly informs us that the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation were superseded by the gospel, and became null and void, after the death of Christ; but none of the inspired writers of the New Testament, give us the least intimation of the weekly Sabbath being abolished. And if it were not abolished in the apostolic days, it could not have been abolished since. It must be, therefore, a divine institution, which is still binding upon all mankind. It was not a typical ordinance, and so could not cease by the appearance of an anti-type, as the typical sacrifices, rites and ceremonies under the law ceased, by the appearance of Christ, whom they prefigured. There has been no substitute instituted in the room of the Sabbath, to supersede it. In a word, there is nothing said in the New Testament, that affords the least reason to doubt of the perpetuity of the Sabbath.

Besides, thirdly, the practice of christians from the apostles' days to this time, is a plain, positive evidence, that the Sabbath is a divine ordinance of perpetual obligation. We have an account of the primitive christians' meeting together statedly on the Sabbath for social religious worship. And though christians have since been divided into a great variety of denominations, yet they have all agreed to observe a weekly Sabbath, with a very few exceptions. Now, it is not easy to account for this general and uninterrupted practice of christians, in observing the Sabbath for nearly two thousand years, unless it has been founded upon the first and original institution of it, for the purpose which Christ mentions. If it was made for the benefit of man, this is a good reason why it is continued from the *beginning*, and should still continue, to the *end* of time. There are, moreover, new reasons for its perpetual continuance, which have occured since its first appointment. It was then designed to be a memorial of the creation of the world; after that, it became a memorial of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; and since that period, it has become a memorial of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and connected with a sacrament, instituted to commemorate his death until his second coming. The Sabbath is as inseparably connected with the gospel, as it ever was with the law, and must, therefore, continue as long as the gospel itself continues. There is as much ground to believe the perpetuity of the Sabbath, as the perpetuity of the Lord's supper. Accordingly we find none have

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denied the perpetuity of the Sabbath, but those who have denied the perpetuity of gospel ordinances. We may be assured that the Sabbath, which was made for man, will continue as long as it can be of any benefit to man, which will be as long, as the human race shall continue in their present probationary state. The last thing is to show,

III. That this standing ordinance is designed and calculated to be of universal benefit to mankind. This Christ plainly suggests in the text. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Here our Saviour, the Lord of the Sabbath, sets it in a much more favorable and important light, than the other inspired writers set the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation. Those they call a yoke of bondage, and weak and beggarly elements. In themselves considered, they had no intrinsic value, but were rather a burden than benefit, to those upon whom they were imposed. But the Sabbath is a peculiar privilege and benefit to all mankind. It is adapted to promote, and not to abridge, their present and future happiness. Its nature, design and tendency, is to recommend it to the esteem and approbation of the whole human race. For,

1. It gives them a precious opportunity of resting from all their worldly cares, labors and employments. They were originally formed for labor; and labor is the indispensable duty of every individual who enjoys mental and bodily strength. It is true, indeed, that all men are not called to the same kinds of labor; but all are bound to be active and diligent in some employment or other, either public or private, either mental or corporeal, which requires rest. This God knew, who formed men for the labors and fatigues of the present life. And where is the person who has not found the Sabbath desirable, as a day of rest from the concerns or labors of the week? There is, perhaps, no lawful calling, which can be pursued with proper activity and diligence, that does not render rest desirable and necessary one day in seven. It has been found by the experience of multitudes, who have been denied the benefit of the Sabbath as a day of rest, that both their bodies and minds have been greatly injured. If health, and strength, and even life itself, be highly valuable, then it is a precious privilege to be allowed to lay aside all secular cares and burdens one day in seven.

2. The Sabbath gives men a happy season for serious reflections and meditations. The common concerns of life generally absorb too much of their attention, to leave them leisure for thinking about more serious and important objects. It is a great benefit, therefore, to the more laborious and busy part of mankind in particular, to be allowed and even required, to turn

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their attention from things *temporal* to things *spiritual*, and carry their thoughts forward into that future and eternal state, to which they are constantly approaching, and in which they are to find their long home. All men are capable of reflecting upon things past, of meditating upon things present, and of anticipating things future. And it highly concerns all persons of every age, character, profession, and condition of life, to pause, ponder, consider and reflect, while they are passing through the busy, noisy and tumultuous scenes of this distracting world. The things of this present life appear very different to all persons, in their leisure, retired, serious and reflecting moments, from what they do while they are eagerly engaged in worldly pursuits. How many, every Sabbath day, view the world very differently from what they habitually view it every other day in the week; and how many serious reflections and resolutions do they form on that holy day, which have a salutary influence upon their thoughts, words and actions in their common intercourse with the world! This is certainly true, with respect to those who remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy from beginning to end; and who seriously and sincerely discharge the appropriate duties of it. And it has a *condemning*, if not a *restraining* influence, upon all who are not totally abandoned to wickedness and stupidity. The Sabbath is a most precious and important season for the most pleasant and most profitable reflections and meditations, whether men improve it for these pious purposes, or neglect and profane it.

3. The Sabbath affords men a happy opportunity for that religious society and intercourse, which directly tends to promote their mutual temporal and spiritual benefit. Mankind are formed for society with each other, and cannot be happy in a solitary state. Mutual intercourse serves to harmonize and civilize them, and to render them more amiable and virtuous, as well as religious. This happy effect the Sabbath has never failed to produce, wherever it has been observed. How differently do those feel and conduct towards each other, who usually meet together every Sabbath, and apparently unite in the service of the sanctuary, from those who neglect the duties of the Sabbath, and only see one another occasionally, as business, inclination, or necessity may require. Both observation and experience prove the civilizing and harmonizing tendency of observing a day of rest and devotion. Those who have observed it, have found sensible advantage from it; and those who have despised and neglected it, have suffered temporal inconveniency and injury from their ungrateful and criminal conduct. The happy influence of the christian Sabbath upon the christian world, has been incalculably great. It has formed

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the christian nations for the enjoyment of that civil order, peace, and harmony, which no unchristian nation ever realized. And there can be no doubt, but the God of order ordained the Sabbath for the great benefit of mankind in their civil, as well as in their religious connections.

4. The Sabbath is highly beneficial, as it affords the most favorable opportunity for training up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parents and heads of families ought to impart religious instruction to those under their care, and to do all they can to promote their spiritual and eternal good. But amidst the labors of the week, they can find but few good opportunities to pour instruction into the minds of children and youth. And if they could find time, children and youth would not be so ready to hear instructions, while they are eagerly pursuing more pleasing objects. But when they know that God requires them to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy; and when they are actually restrained from speaking their own words and finding their own pleasure on that day, their minds are better prepared to hear and feel the force of religious instructions. Religious parents and heads of families do esteem the Sabbath, as a precious season for discharging their duty to those, whose temporal and eternal interests God has, for a time, lodged in their hands. And the effects of such private instructions have often been great, salutary, and lasting, upon the minds of children and youth. Indeed, we generally observe a sensible and striking contrast, between those families where private instructions are given Sabbath after Sabbath, and those who are allowed to grow up in ignorance of religion, and in the neglect of all the duties of the Sabbath.

5. The Sabbath affords a precious opportunity of attending the public worship of God, and of hearing the *public*, as well as private instructions of religion. It is one of the principal purposes of the Sabbath, to give mankind an opportunity of hearing the great truths and duties of the gospel explained and inculcated. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And the Sabbath is the day which God has appointed, to hear his word. And to render this appointment more sacred and important, he has raised up and authorized an order of men to deliver his messages, and inculcate the everlasting gospel upon the minds of sinful and perishing creatures. This he did under the law, and this he does under the gospel. The Sabbath, with these appendages, is an unspeakable gift to those in a state of probation, whose eternal interests are suspended upon their hearing, understanding, believing and accepting the terms of salvation, which he has provided for

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them, and offered to them, through the atoning blood of his dear Son. In this respect, the Sabbath is of all other days the most beneficial and important. For without it, all other days may be infinitely worse than nothing. Thousands and millions of our fellow men are now destitute of the Sabbath, and all the means of salvation which are connected with it, and of consequence, are perishing for the lack of vision. Though those who enjoy the Sabbath, often depreciate and despise it, and consider it a burden rather than a benefit, yet it is of all temporal blessings, the greatest that God has bestowed upon this guilty and perishing world. I may add,

6. The Sabbath is a peculiar and distinguishing benefit to the cordial friends of Christ, as it affords them a precious opportunity of attending to the special ordinances which he has appointed, for their spiritual comfort and growth in grace; I mean baptism and the Lord's supper. Though these ordinances may be occasionally attended on other days, yet the Sabbath is the only stated season for celebrating them. Where the Sabbath is unknown, these ordinances are unknown. Where the Sabbath is neglected, these ordinances are neglected. And where these ordinances are neglected, christians are declining, and religion becoming extinct. There are too many melancholy instances of this kind to be found, in this best part of our country. The Sabbath lies at the foundation of all our religious privileges and enjoyments, if not at the foundation of our civil peace and prosperity. How much would religion decay, and the professors of it decline, if the Sabbath were to be totally neglected in this place, and the sacred ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper to be entirely laid aside! The bare supposition must be extremely painful, to those who esteem a day in God's courts better than a thousand, and the communion with Christ and his friends, the highest enjoyment this side of heaven. To the godly, then, if not to others, the Sabbath must appear extremely precious and beneficial.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the Sabbath was made for man, and designed to promote the benefit of the whole human race in all ages, then they ought to be very thankful for its appointment, perpetuity and obligation. It is the most useful and important ordinance that God ever appointed, and has been productive of the greatest temporal and spiritual blessings in all ages. It has been the principal source of virtue and piety in individuals, in families, and in all civil societies, whether smaller or larger. God promised to smile upon his chosen people, so long as they esteemed

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and observed the Sabbath. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." This promise to Israel was fulfilled, so long as they performed the conditions of it, and sanctified the Sabbath. Our fathers were extremely strict in keeping the Sabbath, for more than a hundred years after God planted them in this land; which was undoubtedly the happy occasion of drawing down a rich profusion of both temporal and spiritual blessings. And though the Sabbath has, of late years, been greatly neglected, despised, and profaned, yet it is the richest source of every blessing we enjoy. We have abundant reasons to be thankful that God still continues this forfeited favor to us, and inspires so many to support, esteem, and improve his holy day. It is the grand palladium and bulwark of every thing we hold most precious and valuable. It behooves those who have experienced saving benefit from the Sabbath and its sacred ordinances, to make it appear to the world that they hold these religious privileges in the highest estimation, and are determined to transmit them, so far as lies in their power, to all future ages. God has deposited these invaluable and sacred privileges in their hands, and they stand responsible, if they suffer them to be wrested from them. If the world despise them, they may not despise them. If the world neglect them, they may not neglect them. If the world profane them, they may not profane them. If the world oppose them, they are bound to protect and preserve them, for the benefit of themselves and all who are coming after them.

2. If the Sabbath be such a great and extensive blessing to mankind, then the neglect, the abuse and profanation of this holy day must be exceedingly sinful and displeasing to God. To abuse the Sabbath is virtually to abuse every other temporal and spiritual blessing, and to provoke God to inflict every temporal and spiritual evil upon individuals and whole nations. The profanation of the Sabbath was the national sin of Israel, and the principal procuring cause of all their national calamities. God told them by the mouth of Moses, "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary," and subjoined a promise of every public and personal blessing. But at the same time he said, if they should not keep his Sabbaths, but despise his statutes, he would make their land desolate, and cause it to enjoy its Sabbaths, which they did not suffer it to enjoy. But

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neither the threatening, nor the inflicting of national judgments, were sufficient to cure them of their national sin of Sabbath breaking. For after they had returned from their long captivity in Babylon, they still persisted in profaning the Sabbath, for which Nehemiah upbraids and condemns them. He says, "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." They were weary of the Sabbath, "saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" God employed various means to allure them to observe his Sabbath. He appointed the best of teachers to enlighten their understandings; he built the most beautiful and magnificent temple to gratify their eyes; and appointed the best of musicians to please their ears; but nevertheless they were bent to forsaking his house, and to profaning his holy day. And the same spirit has reigned in the hearts of the great majority, who have been favored with the Sabbath and its sacred ordinances. This is now the crying sin of every christian nation. The Sabbath was kept, and the sanctuary was reverenced, through this country, until about fifty years past. But since then, "how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" The ways of Zion mourn, the houses of God are forsaken, and the Sabbath despised, neglected and openly profaned. This is a sin of the first magnitude, and the source of every other abounding iniquity. It takes off all civil and religious, public and private restraints, and opens the door to every species of vice, and immorality, and irreligion. It has always been found, that those who profane the Sabbath are incurably vicious. They are out of the reach of the means of instruction and restraint. This ought to make Sabbath breakers tremble.

3. If the Sabbath be designed and calculated to promote the temporal and spiritual interests of all mankind, then it is extremely unwise and impolitic for civil rulers, to do any thing which tends to lead their subjects to disregard and abuse such a holy and benevolent institution. It is weakening their own power and influence, and strengthening the hands and hearts of the lawless and disobedient. This impolicy, it is well known, civil rulers have practiced. King Charles II. appointed certain recreations and amusements, for the express purpose of leading his subjects to disregard and profane the Sabbath; which spread moral corruption through the nation. The rulers of the most refined and polished nation in the world, a few years since,

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totally set aside the Sabbath and all religious ordinances; but they have had, and still have, reasons to regret their folly and guilt. Any rulers will find that they injure themselves as well as their subjects, by banishing the fear of God from their minds. And nothing can have a greater tendency to banish the fear of God from their minds, than allowing them to profane the Sabbath. Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, made Israel to sin, by setting aside religious ordinances of divine appointment, and substituting his own in the room of them; and his successors on the throne pursued the same sinful policy, until the ten tribes were completely corrupted and destroyed. When religious restraints are taken off from the people, civil restraints will become very weak and feeble. This was the case in Israel, and this always will be the case in any civil community. It is extremely unwise and impolitic, to say nothing more, in those who govern, to do any thing which tends to take away the fear of God from before the eyes of their subjects. And when divine ordinances are treated with neglect and contempt, the fear of God will no longer restrain the corruptions of the human heart, which will produce every natural and moral evil.

4. If the Sabbath tends to promote the temporal as well as spiritual good of all mankind, then none can be good members of civil society, who neglect, abuse and profane this divine and benevolent institution. Though they may possess many amiable qualities and talents, and though they may conduct with propriety in their general intercourse with their fellow men, yet their neglect and profanation of the Sabbath will more than counterbalance all their other good deeds. Their example strikes at the root of all civil and religious obligations, and prepares the way to general ignorance, irreligion, profanity, disorder and confusion. It will not, it cannot be denied, that the people in this country have greatly degenerated from the virtue and piety, the peace and harmony of our fathers. And to what has this been principally owing? Has it not been principally owing to the abuse and profanation of the Sabbath? Has not religious declension constantly kept way with the neglect and profanation of the Sabbath? Look into any place, at this day, and will you not find the people degenerate, in proportion to their neglect, contempt and profanation of the Sabbath? And if you find one people more regular, more virtuous, or more religious than another, do you not find that they more generally and more constantly observe the Sabbath and reverence God's sanctuary? Facts speak louder than words, and irresistibly prove that the profanation of the Sabbath is the primary and principal source of the great degeneracy of the present day. And at whose door must this evil be laid? It must be laid at the door of the

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Sabbath breakers. And can such persons be deemed good members of civil society?

5. If the Sabbath be so greatly and universally beneficial to mankind in all respects, then it highly becomes all professors of religion, to make it appear that the Sabbath is their delight, and the holy of the Lord, honorable, by strictly and constantly performing the peculiar duties of it. They have received saving benefit from the Sabbath, and can appreciate its value and importance, by their own happy experience. There are *secret*, *private* and *public* duties peculiar to the Sabbath, and which all professors of religion are under special and solemn obligation to perform. The *secret* duties are serious reflection, meditation and prayer. While they rest from the common cares and concerns of life, it becomes them seriously to meditate and reflect upon what is past, present and to come, in respect to their spiritual interests; and to pour out their hearts with peculiar freedom, solemnity and enlargement before God. Serious meditation and reflection prepare the mind to take clear and extensive views of themselves, of God, and the great interests of his kingdom; which are objects they are too apt to overlook and forget amidst the busy scenes of life. The serious and sincere performance of these secret duties, can scarcely escape the notice of others; for they require time, which cannot be spent without being observed. Those who seriously and habitually discharge the duties of devotion, whether on the Sabbath or other days, exhibit an example full of admonition and instruction.

Secret reflection, meditation and prayer, prepare christians for the *private* duties of the Sabbath, which are reading the Bible, social prayer, and private instruction. Religious parents and heads of families are bound to bring up all under their care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, both by precept and example. And the Sabbath affords them a precious opportunity for discharging these great and difficult duties. To instruct, to counsel, to warn and admonish children and youth, in a proper manner, requires wisdom, prudence, zeal and firmness. For children and youth are extremely impatient of religious instructions and restraints. But the Sabbath is the best, and often the only proper opportunity, which parents and heads of families have, of discharging these necessary and indispensable duties; and if they duly discharge these duties on the Sabbath, children and youth will not commonly need any other restraints. Well instructed and well governed children and youth rarely become notorious Sabbath breakers. These secret and private duties of professors, stand intimately connected with the *public* duties of the Sabbath. The professors of reli-

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gion solemnly engage, to attend the public worship of God and his sacred ordinances constantly, without neglect. It is no neglect when sickness, and other extraordinary circumstances forbid their attendance; but when these things do not occur, no professors have any excuse for staying at home, on account of business, company, or indolence. While professors of religion seriously and constantly perform these appropriate duties of the Sabbath, they have a most salutary influence upon the families in which they live, upon the church to which they belong, and upon the people where they reside. Such exemplary professors are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. These are the men who hold civil and religious society together, suppress vice and immorality, and promote virtue and piety, and draw down the blessing of God upon the degenerate children of men.

6. Since the Sabbath is such a great and extensive benefit to mankind, and the profanation of it is such a great and land-defiling iniquity, it concerns all seriously to inquire, whether they have not been guilty of profaning it, in some way or other. There are a great many ways of profaning the Sabbath, though some are more heinous in the sight of God than others. This question may be put, in the first place, to professing christians. Have you sanctified the Sabbath in secret, in private, and in public? Or have you neglected to improve the precious season, in secret reflection, meditation and prayer? Or have you neglected to instruct, warn and admonish those under your care and committed to your trust? Or have you spent the Sabbath in indolence, and the neglect of the worship and ordinances of God in his house? These are questions which you can understand, and answer for yourselves; and perhaps others too can answer for you; for every species of profaning the Sabbath is generally more or less visible. Or if you have not personally profaned the Sabbath, have you not allowed others to profane it? Or if you have not allowed others to profane it, have you not neglected to reprove them for it, and restrain them from it? There is great reason to fear, that some professors of religion do more or less neglect the secret, private, and public duties of the Sabbath, and by their neglect, not only profane the Sabbath themselves, but lead others to profane it. How much in this way is Christ wounded in the house of his friends! You will all allow, my hearers, that it is proper to put these questions to the professors of religion. And can it be improper to put these questions to others also? Though you have not professed to love God and obey his commands, yet you are his creatures, and bound to love and obey him with all your hearts. The Sabbath was made for you, and has been given to you, though denied to the many millions in the pagan world. You have

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been commanded to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. You have had the duties of the Sabbath often explained and inculcated. You have, many of you at least, seen it strictly and piously observed. All these things have united to increase your obligations, to observe and improve the Sabbath for the important purposes for which it was appointed, and given you. But how have you treated the Sabbath in your childhood, in your youth, or in your manhood, or in your riper years, or in your private or public stations? Have you rested from your worldly cares and labors? Have you performed the secret duties of the day? Have you discharged the private duties of the day? Have you steadily and statedly reverenced God's sanctuary, and given unto him the glory due to his name, in public? If you have, what mean the prancing of horses, the rattle of carriages, the passing and re-passing of travellers before and after public worship? What mean the circles round the house of God after public services are ended? Can it be denied that the Sabbath is publicly and grossly profaned in this place? And can this profanation be justified by professors, or non-professors, by parents, or by children, by the young or by the old? If it cannot be justified, it ought to be condemned; and if it ought to be condemned, it ought to be restrained; and if it ought to be restrained, can it be a doubt who ought to restrain it? The duty of restraining it is too plain to be misunderstood, and too important to be neglected. I ask you, Who ought to be reformers? Will you see the profanation of the Sabbath, and not move a tongue or finger to restrain it? Can you bear to see the virtuous and steady habits of your virtuous and pious parents, violated and treated with contempt? A word to the wise ought to be enough.

The duty of reforming is as plain and imperative as the duty of restraining. On whom does this duty lie? It lies upon those who are conscious of profaning the Sabbath, and opening the flood-gates of iniquity. Ask your own consciences, and they will tell you your first and immediate duty. If you are wise, you will be wise for yourselves; but if you scorn divine reproofs, you alone must bear it.

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SERMON LXXIV.

THE DUTY AND IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THE SABBATH.

Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.
LEVITICUS, xxvi. 2.

GOD distinguished the ten commandments from all his other commands, by writing them with his own hand upon two tables of stone; and some among the ten commandments, by repeating them much oftener than others. The two principal precepts of the decalogue stand distinguished from the rest, in our text and context. "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it; for I am the Lord your God. Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord." These are, for substance, the second and fourth commandments. Their being thus singled out and placed together, seems to denote their peculiar importance, and at the same time shows that the Sabbaths mentioned in the text, are the weekly and not the ceremonial Sabbaths. Since I have several times, in the course of my ministry, treated professedly and largely upon the divine origin and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath, and very often incidentally and cursorily mentioned the subject, I shall, for the sake of variety, pass over some points which the text naturally suggests, and confine what I have to say in the present discourse to the following heads:

I. The length of the Sabbath;
II. The import of keeping the Sabbath;
III. The importance of keeping it.

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I. Let us consider the length of the Sabbath.

This, like many other plain things, has been a matter of doubt. Some who acknowledge the Sabbath to be of divine appointment, yet seem to doubt whether it be of so long duration as many believe and maintain. It may be of service, therefore, to pay particular attention to this point. The Sabbath is often called the Sabbath *day*, which plainly denotes that it is exactly like other days, in respect to duration. When God first appointed the Sabbath, he fixed the measure of other days, and consequently the measure of the Sabbath day. In the beginning "God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light day, and the darkness he called night; and the evening and the morning were the first day." Each of the four following days comprised an evening and morning in it; and so did the last day of creation. For we are told, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." Immediately after this, follows the account of the institution of the Sabbath. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made." If any thing can be determined from the propriety of language and the connection of words, that which is called the seventh day, and the Sabbath day, must be supposed to comprise an evening and morning in it, like the other six days immediately preceding it. The same mode of expression we find in the fourth commandment, when the original precept to keep the Sabbath was renewed. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Here the connection requires us to measure the seventh day by the other six, each of which consisted of twenty-four hours. This agrees with the measure of the ceremonial Sabbath. "From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath." And Nehemiah, to prevent the profanation of the weekly Sabbath, ordered the gates of Jerusalem to be shut from the evening before, till the evening after the Sabbath. "And it came to pass that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath." The Jews in Christ's time, considered the Sabbath as lasting from one setting sun to another. This appears from the fourth chapter of Luke, in which we have an account that Christ went into the

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synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath day. "And when the sun was setting, all that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him, and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them." The Sabbath is no where in scripture represented as a part of a day, or a day of different length from other days, but always represented as being of the same duration as other days of the week, and comprising both an evening and morning in it. This puts it beyond any ground of doubt, that the Sabbath is to be considered and observed as holy time twenty-four hours, and to curtail it to the time of the sun's rising to its setting, is to profane it. I proceed to show,

II. What we are to understand by keeping the Sabbath. "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary."

To keep the Sabbath implies,

1. The keeping up a distinction between that and all other days. This idea is plainly suggested in the fourth command: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it *holy*." All time simply considered is exactly alike. But when the great Proprietor of time has set apart any portion of it, from a common to a sacred use, then the time so consecrated becomes holy, and is to be considered as different from common time. One day in seven God has consecrated to his own use, and distinguished it from the other days in the week. Hence he calls the Sabbath my Sabbath. "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths." As the Sabbath is instituted by God, and for God, so it is emphatically his Sabbath. The Sabbath is all holy time, and he requires us to remember that it is holy time. It is not a matter of indifference, whether men observe the Sabbath as holy time or not. It is taken out of their hands, and they have no right to convert it to their own use. They have no right to add to, or to diminish from, the Lord's day. And though they may, on certain occasions, devote a part or the whole of some other day of the week to religious services, yet the day or part of the day so devoted, does not become a Sabbath or holy time. To keep the Sabbath, therefore, implies the keeping up in remembrance, a distinction between that day and all other days. The sacred authority of God, which is displayed in the appointment of the Sabbath, is to be revered from the beginning to the end of that holy day; for every part of it is equally holy.

2. To keep the Sabbath implies the abstaining from all the common business of other days. This is expressly enjoined in the fourth commandment. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the

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stranger that is within thy gates." Here all common servile labor and secular business is forbidden on the Sabbath. The light of nature, however, as well as the exposition that Christ gave of this prohibition, teaches that works of necessity and mercy may be done on the Sabbath. But, these excepted, no other worldly business may be transacted. The good governor, Nehemiah, understood the keeping of the Sabbath in this strict and proper sense. "In those days, saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" As the Sabbath is wholly consecrated to God, so every thing is a profanation of it, which belongs not to his service. All worldly business, and diversions, and recreations, are inconsistent with the design and services of the Sabbath, and therefore cannot be pursued on that day, without a profanation of holy time. Indeed, the keeping of the Sabbath extends even to the inward exercises of the mind, and requires an abstinence from worldly thoughts and affections, as well as from worldly actions. God requires men, by his prophet Isaiah, to honor him on the Sabbath, "by not doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words." It is the will of God, revealed and clothed with all his authority, that men should withdraw their hands and their hearts from the world, and the things of the world, on his day. This is absolutely necessary in order to keep it holy, and to distinguish it from all other days. The mere abstaining from all worldly employments and pursuits, is not a sufficient sanctification of the Sabbath. The time is not to be wasted and lost. And this leads me to observe,

3. To keep the Sabbath implies the performing of those duties which are peculiar to that day. These are principally the duties of devotion, or religious exercises. When all secular business and concerns are laid aside, it is a proper season for religious worship. At such a time, devout meditation is very natural and proper. The mind is always active, and must be employed about something. And on the Sabbath it ought to be attentively and seriously fixed upon God, the proper object of supreme affection and delight. The retirement of the Sabbath calls for such contemplation upon the Fountain of light,

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and Source of all good. Prayer properly follows devout meditation, and is a peculiar duty of the Sabbath. The reading of the scriptures is another part of the peculiar duties of holy time. But the public worship of God is the most peculiar and important duty of the day which he has set apart for himself. This, therefore, is mentioned in the text, as comprehensive of all the other duties of the Sabbath. "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my *sanctuary*." The sanctuary was the holy place for public worship among God's ancient people. There the divine oracles were deposited, explained, and inculcated. There the mercy seat was erected. There the Most High condescended to manifest his glory, and admit his unworthy creatures to near and intimate communion with himself. Now similar duties are required, and similar privileges are granted, under the gospel. God now requires his people not to forsake their assembling themselves on his day, to hear his word, to celebrate his ordinances, and to offer up their devout praises and prayers to him. Public worship is the capital duty of christians on the Lord's day. Nor can they properly keep his day holy, unless they do, if circumstances admit, appear in his sanctuary, and publicly worship their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. This is properly to keep his Sabbaths, and reverence his sanctuary.

Let us now consider in the last place,

III. The importance of keeping the Sabbath strictly and devoutly. It is important to perform every duty in its proper time and place; but it is of more importance to perform some duties strictly and constantly than others. The keeping of the Sabbath is distinguished from other duties by plain marks of importance. "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord." By this last expression God stamps the Sabbath with all the solemnity and importance of his supreme majesty and authority. This is something more than usual, and designed to impress upon the minds of men the great importance of their keeping holy the day which he has set apart for his own glory, and for their spiritual and eternal benefit. When God formed man in his own image, a rational, holy, and immortal creature, he immediately appointed the Sabbath for his present and future good. For "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." God knew that such a day of rest, retirement and devotion, was suited to the nature and situation of mankind, who are probationers for a future and eternal state. For this cause, God has kept up the positive institution of the Sabbath, ever since the creation of Adam to this day. Other positive religious institutions have been abrogated and set aside. But the institution

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of the Sabbath has never been repealed, because it is more necessary and important than those positive institutions which have been abolished. Besides, God has guarded the Sabbath with very solemn sanctions. Under the law, he made it death for any one to break the Sabbath; and this heavy punishment was actually inflicted upon a guilty individual. When God complains of the great degeneracy of his people, he mentions their profanation of the Sabbath as one of their greatest offences, and as that which in a peculiar manner awakened his indignation, and drew down upon them the severest marks of his displeasure. All these things manifest the great importance of reverencing the Sabbath and the sanctuary. But to impress this idea the more deeply upon the mind, let me descend to particulars and observe,

1. The keeping of the Sabbath is of great importance, as a means of *restraint*. The hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil. They are bent to backsliding. They are strongly inclined to forget and forsake God. It is natural to them to neglect the concerns of the soul, and run into innumerable moral evils. But the keeping of the Sabbath properly, has a powerful restraint upon the corruptions of their heart. It obliges them, one day in seven, to throw aside the common concerns of life, and leads them to think of another world. And there is nothing which is so great a check and restraint upon the minds of men as serious consideration. This, therefore, God strictly enjoins upon them. "Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways." To give the injunction the more force and weight, it is repeated. "Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways." The Sabbath gives time for consideration, which calls upon men to stop and pause. And when they stop and pause, they are constrained to reflect; and the reflections which the Sabbath suggests are of the most serious and important nature. It naturally brings God, and Christ, and eternity into view. And these objects make men serious in spite of their hearts. It is hardly possible for men to become totally stupid, so long as they externally reverence the sanctuary, and refrain from secular employments and pursuits. This restraining influence appears from common observation. Those who externally obey the laws of the Sabbath, generally, if not universally, appear more regular and moral than those who openly and avowedly profane the Lord's day. This shows the great importance to every person, to every family, to every society, and to every community, of keeping the Sabbath as a means of restraint. All men, and all communities of men, stand in need of the Sabbath on this account. Nor can they live in order and regularity without being weekly reminded that they are

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the creatures of God, and stand accountable to him for all their conduct. The experience and observation of every person teaches him the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy, as a means of restraining him from every evil and false way.

2. The keeping of the Sabbath is of great importance, as a means of *instruction*. Mankind are born like the wild ass's colt. They come into the world in a state of total ignorance. They are unacquainted with themselves and with their Creator, and know not their duty nor destination. And in this state of ignorance they are naturally disposed to live, and would live, were it not for instruction, and that instruction which is generally given on the Sabbath. God appointed the Sabbath as a day of instruction, as well as a day of rest. And he has accordingly appointed the means of instruction to be employed on the Sabbath. He appointed his word to be read, explained and inculcated on the Sabbath, under the law, and he appointed the priests to perform this public service. And under the christian institution he has appointed ministers to preach the gospel and administer divine ordinances on the Sabbath. These are means of instruction in matters of the highest importance to probationers for eternity. In order to enjoy these means of instruction, the keeping of the Sabbath is absolutely necessary. For if the observation of the Sabbath were laid aside, the word of God and divine ordinances would be generally neglected, and religious instruction generally cease. Men must have time, and generally appointed time, to gain instruction in the arts and sciences, and this is equally true in regard to religious instruction. The Sabbath is a time, and a time appointed by divine authority, to give and receive religious instruction. And if this time is not kept sacred to this purpose, religious instruction will soon come to an end. The keeping of the Sabbath, therefore, as the means of instruction, is highly important, in order to make men wise to salvation.

3. The Sabbath must be devoutly and strictly kept, as the means of the highest *enjoyment*. It is wisely and graciously adapted to afford all good men the highest delight and satisfaction. When they are wearied with the world, and longing after the enjoyment of God, the Sabbath allows them time, and gives them the means of drawing near to God, and of enjoying a sensible and joyful communion with him. They may then wait upon the Lord without distraction, and come even to his seat without obstruction. On this account good men have highly esteemed and strictly observed the Sabbath. David prized the Sabbath as the means of his highest enjoyment. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my

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life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." He expressed his delight in the Sabbath and the duties of the sanctuary, in still livelier and warmer terms. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." All good men thus reverence God's sanctuary, and find a peculiar pleasure in attending his word and ordinances in his house. The keeping of the Sabbath is to them the duty of duties, or that upon which all their religious duties depend. It puts life and alacrity into all their devout exercises and religious performances, and so, is the means of their highest joys and brightest prospects. I may add,

4. The keeping of the Sabbath is immensely important, as a means of preserving religion in the world. The Lord's day is consecrated to religion, and designed as a sacred enclosure, to prevent the intrusions of the world into it. The men of the world are united in their opposition to religion; and they would soon extinguish it, were it not for the sacred protection of the Sabbath. This holy day lays a restraint upon the world, and bids them let religious days alone. It ties their hands, and gives its friends full liberty to acknowledge their Creator and Redeemer, and publicly appear on the Lord's side, and promote his great cause. And to this, under providence, the preservation of religion has been more owing than to any other and all other secondary causes. We find, that wherever and whenever the Sabbath has been set at nought, then and there, religion has decayed and died. And we have reason to believe that religion will be preserved no longer in any place, than the Sabbath is sanctified and devoutly kept. Only let the Sabbath be profaned and treated as common time, and the forms of religion will no longer be seen. And if this be true, the keeping of the Sabbath is of infinite importance. There is no one duty on which so much good depends as the keeping of the Sabbath, and reverencing God's sanctuary; and of course, the neglect of no other duty can be so fatal to religion as the neglect of this.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the due observance of the Sabbath be so necessary to promote and maintain the cause of religion in the world, as we have seen, then it may be pretty easy to determine whether religion is increasing or decreasing in this country at the present day, by the manner in which the people in general treat

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the Sabbath. The strict or lax manner in which any people regard the Sabbath, is the most visible and infallible criterion by which their religious character can be formed. It was by this criterion, that God characterized his people of old, in respect to the increase or decrease of real religion among them. By the same criterion, the religious character of the people in New England has been estimated and represented by the most competent and impartial judges. While Israel maintained their primitive purity, and kept the Sabbath, and reverenced God's sanctuary, they were represented as holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase. This was their amiable religious character, while they followed God in the wilderness. And such was the amiable religious character of the people here, while they followed God in the wilderness and for many years afterwards. There was no one thing, that they were so strict and conscientious in, as in the keeping of the Sabbath. They considered the whole day of twenty-four hours as holy time. They abstained from all secular employments and amusements which they deemed lawful on other days, and spent the whole day in religious duties, and not in idleness, visiting, nor travelling. Though human nature was the same then as it is now, and individuals esteemed the Sabbath a weariness, and wished to profane it, yet parents and rulers were so religious, and so cordially united in exercising their proper authority, that all external violations of the Sabbath were completely restrained. No straggler was to be seen on the road, and no member of a family to be seen from home, only as they were going to or from the public worship of God. The Sabbath was a still and solemn day from beginning to end. This was seen and admired by foreigners, who formed an exalted idea of their religious character, and spread the fame of their piety far and wide in the christian world. Now, if their strict observance of the Sabbath justly denominated them an eminently religious people, must not their present laxness and licentiousness on the Sabbath, characterize them as a degenerate, backsliding people? Every person in the world must form this idea of them. Who that has travelled from Maine to Georgia, has not formed this idea of religious declension in the United States? Who that travels from town to town, and observes the laxness of people on the Sabbath, does not form his opinion of the religious character of every town and parish, according to their appearance and conduct on the Lord's day? Let the oldest man now living, who has had the best means and opportunities of knowing the religious state of the inhabitants in New England, give us his real opinion of the former and present state of the people, and will he not say that he is aston-

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ished at their deep declension; and especially in respect to the sanctification of the Sabbath? Though other sins have greatly prevailed through the land, yet no sin is so generally, so openly, and boldly committed, as the sin of Sabbath breaking, which is forbidden by the laws of God and man, and which might be so easily restrained, did not the people in general love to have it so.

2. It appears from what has been said upon the duration, the nature and duties of the Sabbath, how many ways it may be profaned.

When God appointed the Sabbath, he sanctified it, or made it holy time, in distinction from every other day in the week. To deny, therefore, the sanctity of the Sabbath, and view and treat it as common time, is a plain and avowed profanation of it. This denial of the *sanctity* of the Sabbath in theory and sentiment, is what many learned and unlearned men are guilty of. Dr. Paley, a very ingenious and learned writer, in his treatise on moral and political subjects, labors to prove that the Sabbath is not of divine institution and obligation under the gospel, and that christians have a right to view it and treat it as common time. And other ministers, of different denominations of christians, maintain the same sentiment, which has been and is now taught in some of our highest seats of learning. And some of our learned rulers and civilians adopt and practice upon this lax opinion of the Sabbath, which has contributed and still contributes to weaken and destroy in the minds of many, their obligation to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. This sentimental denial of the sanctity of the Sabbath is really alarming and dangerous.

To curtail the Sabbath in the beginning and ending of it, is to profane it practically. This profanation has become very common and general. How many consider the Sabbath as the shortest day in the week. They mean to begin it at sun-rise, and to end it at sun-down. They feel themselves completely justified in cutting off from it the evening before and the evening following the Sabbath, and take full liberty to spend either of the two evenings in their own employments or recreations. This is a very gross and criminal profanation of the Sabbath, though the law of the land screens the guilty from human punishment. Others more boldly and daringly profane the Sabbath, by spending the whole day in idleness, or laboring, or travelling, or visiting, or in unlawful amusements and dissipation. These things are more uncommon among us; but there is another way of profaning the Sabbath, which notoriously prevails here, as well as in other places. I mean the neglect of the duties appropriate to God's holy day. They neither read

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his word, nor call upon his name, nor pay their vows in public. This is a very plain, open, and criminal transgression of the command in the text. "Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord." It seems as though many imagine that there is no great harm in merely not attending public worship, if they only lay aside all their worldly concerns, stay at home, and disturb none who are disposed to reverence the sanctuary, and to meet God where he has appointed to meet them. But God views those who unnecessarily absent themselves from his public worship, as extremely criminal. He asked those who despised and neglected his sanctuary, "Will a man rob God? But ye have robbed me, saith the Lord." It is no trivial violation of duty for men to rob God of that public homage and glory which is due to his great and glorious name. In whatever way men profane the Sabbath, they disobey God, and contract aggravated guilt.

3. If the nature, design and tendency of the Sabbath have been properly illustrated, then we may justly conclude that the profanation of it, in any way whatever, is a very heinous sin. It is in its own nature exceedingly sinful, because it flows from direct disaffection and enmity towards God. If men loved God, they would love his Sabbaths and sanctuary, and delight in all the duties appropriated to his day and to his house. Those who profane the Sabbath mean to sin against God, rather than man. They hardly think of breaking any human laws by profaning the Sabbath, but they do very often think of breaking the law of God, which requires them to remember it, and keep it holy. They manifest known disaffection and disrespect to God and to his commands, which is one of the most heinous sins against God, that they can commit. Nor do they manifest less disaffection to all religion; by their profanation of the Sabbath. The man laboring on the Sabbath, or travelling on the Sabbath, or visiting on the Sabbath, tells every one he meets that he disregards all religion, and every body understands the language of his conduct in its true sense, whether he be a neighbor or stranger. The profanation of the Sabbath comprises all irreligion and impiety; for though it does not prove that a man will take the name of God in vain, yet it does prove that he does not refrain from that sin, by any regard to God or religion. The profanation of the Sabbath is connected with a general course of sinning, and naturally leads Sabbath breakers into every species of open and high handed vice and immorality. How many poor, guilty creatures have acknowledged, that the profanation of the Sabbath led them to those enormous crimes, that brought them to an infamous death by the hand of public justice!

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4. It appears from what has been said in this discourse, that those who profane the Sabbath, are not only great sinners, but great corrupters. Men may be great sinners while they are not great corrupters. They may have and indulge great disaffection to God, to religion, and even to their fellow men internally, while they externally treat God, and religion, and their fellow men with apparent propriety and respect. Such persons cannot be called corrupters; for they throw the weight of their example into the scale of virtue and religion, and restrain others from the paths of wickedness. But those who profane the Sabbath in any form, set a corrupting example. Those who publish their loose sentiments respecting the Sabbath are great corrupters, and take a direct way to convince all their readers that holy time is not holy, that they may neglect all the peculiar duties of the Sabbath, and spend it in the manner most agreeable to their corrupt hearts. Those who merely abstain from the common concerns of life, without attending either the private or public worship of God on his day, set a loose and dangerous example, which tends to destroy all religion and morality. And those who go into the sanctuary of God without reverence, and without decency, and attempt to excite inattention and levity in the time of divine service, are gross offenders and corrupters. Are not such corrupters to be seen very frequently on the road, in private houses, and in the house of God? What immense evils do such corrupters commit, spread and promote! How many do those who travel from house to house, from town to town, and from state to state, corrupt, from Sabbath to Sabbath! How many will a father who keeps himself and his family from the house of God on the Sabbath, from month to month, and from year to year, corrupt! And how fast will such corrupt families increase in numbers and influence, until they diminish, divide, or destroy a religious society! See the awful wastes that have been made and are making by the profanation of the Sabbath. It is a land-defiling and corrupting iniquity. It begins very gradually and imperceptibly. One in a family begins to stay at home, then another, and another, until the whole family statedly absent themselves from public worship. One family in a neighborhood begins to stay at home upon the Sabbath, then another, and another, and very soon all, or nearly all in the neighborhood follow the corrupt example which has been set them; and one neighborhood can very easily corrupt another. These facts are known to all the people in this place; and will they still imagine, that Sabbath breaking in any form is a small and excusable fault?

5. In the view of this subject every one may see the great

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importance of preventing and restraining the profanation of the Sabbath as much as possible. We know the time has been in this land and in this place, when the sanctification of the Sabbath was maintained, and the profanation of it generally prevented and restrained. Though it may be more difficult now than it was once, to prevent and restrain the profanation of the Sabbath, yet it does not appear to be an insurmountable difficulty. There are means which may be used, and which ought to be used, that if they were used, would produce a most desirable effect. But who shall use these means? I answer,

1. All professors of religion. They have bound themselves, freely and publicly, to keep God's Sabbaths and reverence his sanctuary. Let them fulfil their covenant obligations. Let them constantly attend public worship, and command their children and households to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy, by avoiding all those things which are forbidden on the Sabbath, and by doing the duties appointed to be done on that day. Let all professors of religion constantly and conscientiously do the duties of the Sabbath, and they will do much to promote the sanctification, and to prevent the profanation of the Sabbath. Let men of sobriety, property and influence constantly attend public worship, and oblige all whom they employ in their service, and admit into their hired houses, to attend also, and this will powerfully operate to prevent and restrain the profanation of the Sabbath. It is in vain to say that they have no authority over their hired men and tenants; for they may agree with those whom they hire or admit into their houses, upon the condition that they will engage to attend public worship. Let all informing officers of every grade, do all that the law of the land requires them to do, to prevent and restrain the profanation of the Sabbath, on the road, in taverns, and in the house of God, and I have no doubt but a visible reformation will appear. Let none say these are vain and visionary means of a reformation. They are not vain, nor visionary; but plain, solid, reasonable means, which have been employed and found to be efficient. Why will you not be persuaded to use all the means in your power to promote the temporal and spiritual good of yourselves, and of your fellow men? Why will you not put away the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, and let the love and fear of God govern your views, and feelings, and conduct? There is no danger in doing duty; but there is fearful danger in neglecting it, and becoming partakers in other men's guilt.

The sanctification of the Sabbath is a universal duty. God commands all men every where to keep his Sabbath, and rev-

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erence his sanctuary. This command binds the rich as well as the poor, the ruler as well as the subject, and the young as well as the old, to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. None have a right to spend the holy time which God set apart for himself, in idleness, in pursuing their secular concerns, in following their pleasures and amusements, or in absenting themselves from the public worship of God. But is there one day in the week so idly, so unprofitably, and so sinfully spent in this land of gospel light, as the holy Sabbath? How many individual persons, and how many whole families, are Sabbath breakers in this place! How many that might be, and ought to be, in the house of God, are absent from it every Sabbath! How rapidly is this evil of evils increasing! Is not this alarming? does it not presage that the love of many is waxing cold, and that iniquity is abounding, and breaking over all restraints? Is it not time for professors of religion to reform? Is it not time for parents to reform? Is it not time for the young, who have been taught in their childhood by their parents and instructers to remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy, to reform? Is it not time for all Sabbath breakers to reform?

Let it not be said, that we here observe the Sabbath and attend public worship as well, as the parishes and towns around us do. Whether this be true or not I cannot say. But if it be true, it is no excuse for those who neglect the duties of the Sabbath here. None are urged to come to the house of God for the sake of being seen of men, but for the sake of doing honor to God, and securing the salvation of their own souls. Can you believe that those who unnecessarily and habitually neglect the public worship of God, perform any other religious duty? Can you believe that those who neglect all religious duties, are walking in the strait and narrow path to heaven? This subject now admonishes all to review their past feelings and conduct in regard to the Sabbath. It is a very infallible test of religion or irreligion, of piety or impiety. Has the Sabbath been your delight, and the holy of the Lord honorable in your views and feelings? Has it been a pleasure, or a burden? Answer these questions honestly and impartially to yourselves, and you can hardly fail of drawing a just conclusion, whether you are saints or sinners, and whether you are in the path to eternal life, or in the path to eternal death.

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PART XXI.

THE CHURCH.

SERMONS LXXV.—LXXVII.

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SERMON LXXV.

THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION ABOLISHED BY THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.—Hebrews, x. 9.

The apostle wrote this epistle for the particular benefit of the believing Jews. They had been educated under the Mosaic dispensation. They firmly believed the divine mission of Moses. They said, "We know that God spake unto Moses." They considered the Old Testament as given by divine inspiration, and clothed with divine authority. They found a difficulty, therefore, in reconciling the law with the gospel, or the Mosaic dispensation with the Christian, which seemed to be inconsistent with each other. The difficulty, however, did not arise from any real inconsistency between the law and the gospel, but from their ignorance of the nature, design and meaning of the law. They did not know that their laws were in their own nature temporary, that their rites and ceremonies were altogether typical, and that the whole Mosaic dispensation was designed to prepare the way for the coming of Christ and the universal spread of the gospel. Had they understood these things, they would have found no difficulty in reconciling the doctrines, precepts and institutions of the Christian dispensation with those of the Mosaic, under which they had lived, and by which they had been bound. To clear up these points the apostle wrote this epistle, which is a plain commentary upon the laws of Israel, and very instructive to both Jews and Gentiles. To accomplish this purpose, his method is easy and natural. He begins with illustrating the divine nature and the divine authority of Christ, by which he was superior to Moses

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and all the prophets. He says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." From the divinity of Christ and his supremacy above all the prophets, he justly infers that the Jews ought to regard his commands, rather than the commands of Moses. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him who appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house." "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant—but Christ as a son over his own house." After this the apostle proceeds to explain the rites and ceremonies of the law, and shows that they were altogether typical of Christ and the gospel. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect." He now expressly asserts that Christ was authorized by the Father to set aside the Mosaic dispensation, and establish his own. "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sins, thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above, when he said, sacrifice, and offering, and burnt offerings, and offerings for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which were offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." Though there had been a patriarchal dispensation, yet the Mosaic dispensation was the first, and the christian dispensation the second, in respect to the Jews. The apostle, therefore, means to assert in the text, that Christ did take away the Mosaic dispensation and establish his own. The first ceased as soon as the second was instituted by Christ. This then is the truth, which is now to be considered,

That the Mosaic dispensation ceased when the gospel dispensation commenced. I shall,

I. Show that the Mosaic dispensation was abrogated by the gospel;

II. Show how the Mosaic dispensation was abrogated by the gospel; and,

III. Point out those things under the Mosaic dispensation, which were abrogated by the gospel.

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I. I am to show that the Mosaic dispensation was abrogated by the gospel. This will appear if we consider,

1. That the Mosaic dispensation was of such a nature, that it might be abrogated. It was altogether a positive institution. It was founded on mutable, and not immutable reasons. Moral laws are founded on the nature of things, or on certain relations between God and his rational creatures, which are permanent and immutable. But all positive laws and institutions are founded on mutable relations and circumstances; and, of course, are as mutable as the relations and circumstances upon which they are founded. For about two thousand years after the apostacy of the human race, there was no occasion for the Mosaic dispensation. But when God saw it necessary to select one nation from the rest of mankind, then he saw it necessary to institute the Mosaic dispensation. Hence it is evident that that dispensation might be abrogated, or set aside, when it was no longer necessary to preserve one nation distinct from all the other nations of the earth. And when Christ appeared in the flesh, the time was come, in which God had designed to break down the legal distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles, and to send the glad tidings of salvation to all nations, without distinction. Accordingly, he then saw the same reasons for abrogating, that he first saw for the instituting, of the Mosaic dispensation. It is to be supposed, therefore, that he could abrogate that dispensation which had answered the ends of its institution, and establish another. So that the very nature and design of the Mosaic dispensation, afford a strong presumptive evidence that it was actually set aside when the gospel dispensation commenced.

2. It was predicted that the Mosaic dispensation should be abrogated, by another and more perfect dispensation under the gospel. God foretold this by the prophet Jeremiah. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." The same thing is foretold by the prophet Isaiah. "And it shall come to pass when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall they remember it; neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they visit it; neither shall it be done any more." The same abrogation of the Mosaic dispensation is predicted by all those passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah and Malachi, which foretell the calling of the Gentiles into the church of God. But there are one or two predictions of this import, which deserve to be cited

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in this connection. Daniel, speaking of the Messiah, says, "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." This is a plain prediction of the entire end of the Mosaic dispensation, in the day of Christ. And it is still farther to be observed, that even Moses himself foretold that his own dispensation should give place to another, instituted by a superior lawgiver. These are his words. "And the Lord said unto me—I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." This great prophet was no other than Christ, who was to come and reveal his Father, and fulfil his pleasure in setting up his kingdom among all nations. It appears from these predictions, that it was God's original design and revealed will, that the law should give way to the gospel, and that when the christian dispensation commenced, the Mosaic should cease. And this, I may observe,

3. The apostles assure us did actually take place at the death of Christ. Here the epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, Ephesians and Hebrews, might, were there time, be pertinently quoted. But I shall select a few plain passages only. The text expressly asserts that Christ has abrogated the whole Mosaic dispensation: "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second." If we now turn to the third chapter of the second of Corinthians, we shall there find the apostle expressly declaring that the Mosaic dispensation is wholly done away. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." The same apostle, speaking to the Ephesians, who were Gentiles, says, "But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath

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made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body, by the cross." The law of commandments here mentioned, undoubtedly means the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, all which the apostle says Christ has abolished, or completely abrogated. The next thing is,

II. To show how the Mosaic dispensation was abrogated, or set aside by the gospel.

There are two ways in which human legislators abrogate their own laws. One way is, to pass them for a limited time; and when that time is expired, they cease of course. And another way is, to pass new particular acts to repeal them. But we do not find that the Mosaic dispensation was abrogated in either of these ways. There was no certain period specified in the Mosaic laws, how long they should continue in force; nor did Christ authoritatively declare that the legal dispensation should be no longer binding. But there were two ways by which he took away the first, and established the second dispensation.

1. By completely fulfilling the legal dispensation, which was designed to be typical of him as Mediator. The temple, the priests and their sacred services, the sacrifices, the oblations, the purifications, and almost all things under the law, were types and figures of Christ; and all these he fulfilled, by his incarnation, obedience and sufferings. When he first began his ministry, he told the people that he came to answer the design of the legal dispensation. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." And when John declined baptizing him, he urged the necessity of his baptism, in order to fulfil the law of purification. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." He pursued this course of conduct through his whole life, until he drank the last drop of the bitter cup of suffering. So that he could say before he expired on the cross, "It is finished." So far as the legal dispensation either bound him, or typified him, he completely fulfilled it. And when it was perfectly fulfilled in the great anti-type, it no longer had any meaning, force, or obligation. A human law becomes null and void, when there is no occasion for it. Thus a law against destroying certain animals, necessarily dies when those animals become extinct. All the laws, rites and ceremo-

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nies of the Mosaic dispensation, which were typical of Christ before his incarnation, entirely ceased when he actually appeared, suffered and died on the cross. This was signified by the rending of the veil in the temple at his crucifixion. Just so far as the law had a shadow of good things to come, it was entirely abrogated, by the incarnation, life and death of Christ.

2. Christ set aside the legal dispensation, by appointing new ordinances which superseded it. Human legislators often pass new acts, and declare them to be binding, any law or laws to the contrary notwithstanding. And such new acts entirely supersede or abrogate any old ones of a contrary nature or import. So Christ made a number of new laws or institutions, by virtue of his own divine authority, which virtually superseded or set aside the laws and institutions of the Mosaic dispensation. He instituted baptism in the room of circumcision, and the sacramental supper in the room of the passover. He instituted one order of ministers in the room of the high priest, the priests and the Levites. He instituted congregational churches in the room of one national church. He committed all ecclesiastical authority to the members of a congregational church, instead of confining it to the officers of a church. And he commanded the gospel to be preached to all nations, instead of confining it, as before, to one nation only. Thus, by his new institutions, he put an end to all the religious institutions, rites, and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation; which was, to all intents and purposes, breaking down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles; or taking away the first, and establishing the second dispensation. As soon as either Jews or Gentiles became believers of the gospel, they were no longer obliged to regard a single article of the Mosaic dispensation; but were bound to give up all its types and shadows for the substance. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts the Galatians to renounce the legal dispensation entirely, that they may enjoy the liberty and benefits of the gospel dispensation. "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Thus it appears that Christ did absolutely take away the first, or Mosaic dispensation, by establishing the second, or Christian dispensation. It only remains to inquire,

III. What things under the law were abrogated by the gospel. There is room for this inquiry, because the Mosaic laws

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were not individually and particularly repealed, by any thing that Christ did or said. They were only virtually abolished; which proved an occasion of a diversity of opinions on the subject, in the days of the apostles, and indeed ever since. It is universally allowed by christians, that some part of the legal dispensation is abrogated; but still many imagine that some part of it continues to be binding. And in order to determine this point, it may be proper to enter into particulars; and I observe,

1. That all those things which were merely typical of Christ, are undoubtedly abrogated. After Christ came, all the types and figures respecting the promised Messiah became totally insignificant and unmeaning. To observe them after that period, would be virtually to disbelieve and deny that Christ has come in the flesh, and performed the work of redemption. It is utterly inconsistent with the belief of the gospel to maintain that the typical part of the Mosaic dispensation is still binding upon christians.

2. All things of an ecclesiastical nature under the law, are abrogated under the gospel. By instituting congregational churches, Christ entirely dissolved the national church of the Jews. And when that church was dissolved, all the laws, rules, regulations and forms of proceeding in that church, became totally null and void. Christians are not holden to observe any of the ecclesiastical laws of Moses, because Christ has completely established all the rules and orders to be observed in the government of the churches which he has instituted. The laws and the modes of executing the laws in the Christian church, are not to be found in the Old Testament, but only in the New.

3. All things of a political nature in the Jewish church, were abrogated by the gospel. Though the political laws of Moses were distinct from his ecclesiastical laws, yet they were inseparably connected together; because the Jewish church took in all the Jewish nation. When, therefore, their church was dissolved, their political laws and constitutions were dissolved with it. There was an indissoluble union between Moses and Aaron, or between the civil and religious government of Israel. It was a *theocracy*, or a government instituted by God, and administered by those whom he appointed. And he united the civil and religious rulers in the administration of government. The dissolution of their religious government was necessarily the dissolution of their civil government. But when the Christian dispensation commenced, the Jewish theocracy was entirely superseded and dissolved.

4. All things which were designed to separate the Jews from

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other nations, were abrogated by Christ. Many of their civil laws and religious rites and ceremonies were intended and calculated to form a wall of separation between them and all the heathen nations. But when Christ came and introduced his new dispensation, he entirely removed all the barriers which the laws of Moses had set up, to separate the Jews from the Gentiles; and required them to lay aside their mutual prejudices, and to maintain a cordial union and communion in all the doctrines, ordinances and duties of the gospel. Accordingly, Christ commanded his apostles, and through them all their successors in the ministry, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, without the least regard to the former distinction between Jews and Gentiles. And after this command, no believer of the gospel had a right to observe any Jewish law, rite, or ceremony, which had a tendency to obstruct a free and universal intercourse among all nations, in respect to the liberties and privileges of the christian religion. No Jewish or Gentile believers could observe any of the Mosaic laws which were designed to separate the seed of Abraham from any other nations, without being guilty of disobedience to Christ, and counteracting his design of sending the gospel to all the world. I may add,

5. That the gospel abrogated every precept of a positive nature, which was peculiar to the Mosaic dispensation. There were some moral precepts under the law which were of perpetual obligation. All laws founded in the nature of things, have a moral obligation, which cannot be dissolved. The moral precepts, which were given under the patriarchal dispensation, were binding under the Mosaic dispensation, and are still binding under the Christian dispensation. Some precepts of Moses were founded in the nature of things; and all such commands still retain their full force and moral obligation, in respect to both Jews and Gentiles. The divine law against murder, for instance, was of a moral nature, and equally binding in the days of Noah, in the days of Moses, and in these days. But all the laws of Moses which were of a positive nature, and were peculiar to his dispensation, are abolished and done away, by the gospel. Christians are not bound by any law peculiar to the Jews. For Christ hath taken away the first, and established the second dispensation.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the Mosaic dispensation ceased when the gospel dispensation commenced, then the apostles had a right to disregard, and to teach others to disregard, all the Mosaic rites and

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ceremonies. They sometimes regarded, and sometimes totally disregarded, the peculiarities of the legal dispensation. Paul, in one instance, purified himself according to the ceremonial law; and, in another instance, he circumcised a Gentile convert. But in his public instructions, he taught "the Jews, which were among the Gentiles, to forsake Moses, saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs." He severely reproved the Galatians for observing the law and holding themselves bound by it. And he says, he blamed Peter for conforming to the customs and manners of the Jews. "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them who were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Now, if what has been said be true, that the gospel has superseded the law, it is easy to see that the rites and ceremonies of the law were perfectly indifferent things, after the gospel dispensation commenced; and viewed in that light, might be regarded, or disregarded, by less informed believers. But if any regarded them as still binding with divine authority, they disobeyed Christ, and set him aside as lawgiver in his own kingdom. Though the apostles knew that all the rites, ceremonies and institutions of the law were entirely superseded and abolished by the gospel, yet they found it difficult to bring many of their Jewish, and some of their Gentile converts, to renounce rites and ceremonies which had long been considered as sacred and important. They therefore treated this subject with peculiar tenderness. Paul says to christians, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him." "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." It is here

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supposed, that weak christians might conscientiously observe a holy day, or neglect to observe it; and observe, or neglect to observe, any other Mosaic precept or prohibition. The apostles taught their converts that the Mosaic dispensation was abrogated by the gospel, and ceased to bind them, whether they were Jews or Gentiles; but at the same time left them to act according to the dictates of their own judgment and conscience, and according to the particular circumstances in which they were placed. For they knew that when their converts became fully acquainted with the gospel, they would clearly see that it had superseded the law, and that they were no longer bound by it.

2. In the view of this subject, we may clearly discover the absurdity of Dr. Tindal's reasonings, who maintains that Christianity is as old as the creation. This deistical writer opposes all divine revelation, on the principle that men are capable of knowing what is right and wrong in the nature of things, and consequently that all divine laws are unnecessary to teach them their duty. He says all moral laws are needless, because these are founded in the nature of things; and, therefore, the mere light of nature is sufficient to discover them. As to positive laws, he says they are either useless or absurd. For if they require what the moral laws require, they are useless; or if they require any thing different from what the moral laws require, they are unjust, unreasonable and absurd. On this ground, he attempts to show the absurdity of both the Old and New Testament, which, he says, are not only repugnant to the laws of nature, but contradictory to each other. It is granted that right and wrong are founded in the nature of things, and that mankind are capable of discovering, in some cases, what they ought, and what they ought not to do, by the bare light of nature. But were they ever so well disposed to discover their duty by the light of nature, yet this dim light would, in a thousand cases, leave them in total darkness. The light of nature, therefore, does by no means supersede the necessity of a divine revelation, which is designed not only to point out duty to men, but to increase and impress upon their minds their moral obligation to do it. Though the light of nature teaches men that they ought not to murder one another, yet it was not unnecessary for God to say to Noah, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." Or to say to every man in the sixth command, "Thou shalt not kill." Though this precept is founded in the nature of things, and binds all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, to obey it; yet it is much more criminal for a Jew or Christian to commit murder, than for a heathen, who does not know that

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God has forbidden it, by his infinite authority. And this holds true, in respect to all moral commands, in both the Old and New Testaments, which God has sanctioned by his own supreme authority. The moral law, in all cases, is more binding than the law of nature, because it has the sanction of divine authority, which the simple law of nature has not. Tindal's objection, therefore, against the moral laws in the Bible, is entirely groundless. They do not contradict, but confirm all the laws of nature, which need a divine sanction. And as God has a supreme right to make moral laws, which are founded in the nature of things, so he has the same right to make positive laws, which are founded in the relation of things. The nature of things is immutable; but the relation of things is mutable. And as the moral laws of God are founded in the nature of things, so they are immutable; but as the positive laws of God are founded in the relation of things, so they are mutable, and may be abrogated, or set aside, when the relation of things requires it. This was the case in respect to the positive, ceremonial laws under the Mosaic dispensation. These were all positive precepts, which God had the same right to abolish, abrogate, or set aside, as to make. As he made them in consistency with the moral law, so he has abrogated, or set them aside, in consistency with the moral law.

The laws of the Old Testament do not contradict any law of nature, and the laws of the New Testament do not contradict any of the laws of the Old Testament, nor any of the laws of nature. Tindal and all other deistical writers have employed much learning and no less art, to make it appear that the Old and New Testament contradict each other, and prove each other to be groundless, absurd and inconsistent. But they have always labored in vain, and have often been fairly refuted. Though the Christian dispensation does supersede the Mosaic, yet it does not contradict that dispensation, but completely fulfils and confirms it. Hence,

3. If the Christian dispensation has superseded the Mosaic, in the manner that has been represented, then there appears an entire harmony between the Old Testament and the New. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law of Moses was designed to prepare the way for the gospel. All the rites, ceremonies and institutions under the Mosaic dispensation, were appointed for the particular purpose of preparing the way for the Christian dispensation; and they completely answered their original design. There is the same connection between the law and the gospel, or between the Mosaic and Christian dispensation, as there is between means and ends, which is not only a necessary, but

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visible connection. We can see how the Mosaic law prefigured Christ, and how he completely fulfilled it, by his birth, life, sufferings and death. The connection between the Old and New Testament is as plain and visible as the connection between any other cause and effect. None but God was capable of forming such a system of means, which should continue to operate through the long period of two thousand years, before they brought about the great and glorious event of the crucifixion of Christ and the gospel dispensation. The connection between the types of Christ and his character and conduct, cannot, with the least probability, be ascribed to mere chance and accident. There is not a stronger argument in favor of the truth and divinity of both the Old and New Testament, than their visible connection with each other, as cause and effect.

4. It appears from what has been said, that the evidence of the truth and divinity of the Christian dispensation is constantly increasing, by means of the Mosaic dispensation. The more critically and impartially that dispensation is examined, the more clearly it will appear to have been typical of Christ and the gospel. The Jews acknowledge that God spake unto Moses, and inspired him to write the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books they have always regarded and read, as clothed with divine authority. And these books contain all the moral, civil and ceremonial laws, which were types of Christ, and which they have always applied to their expected Messiah. Though they now deny that the person, character, conduct and sufferings of Christ answered to those types, yet the types, and character, and conduct of Christ still remain recorded in the Old and New Testament; and we have as good a right and opportunity to compare the types with the great anti-type, as the Jews have had, and still have. And what if some of them did not believe, and do not yet believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? It is only for us to look into the Old Testament, and read it without the veil of prejudice, and we may clearly discern the exact correspondence between the types and the glorious persons typified. The Old Testament, at this day, is too little read and studied by christians. It is full of instruction, and contains the most infallible evidence of the truth and divine inspiration of the New Testament. Who can read the various sacrifices, oblations, purifications and ceremonies under the law, and not perceive them to be types and shadows of good things to come? Or who can read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and not perceive a plain prediction of the sufferings and death of Christ? It is very difficult to prove

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the inspiration of the Old Testament without the New, and the inspiration of the New Testament without the Old. But by reading them both, and comparing them together, it is easy to see that they visibly bear the signature of their divine Author. If the inspiration of the Old Testament be allowed, the inspiration of the New cannot be denied; and if the inspiration of the New Testament be allowed, the inspiration of the Old cannot be denied. The more both the Old and New Testament have been read, studied and explained, ever since the commencement of the gospel dispensation, the more clearly and fully has the divine authority of both been confirmed.

5. If the Christian dispensation has entirely superseded the Mosaic, then there is no propriety, at this day, in reasoning from the Mosaic dispensation to the Christian. This mode of reasoning has been the source of innumerable errors in opinion and practice. How many have been led to conclude, that the doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance to civil authority is true, and ought to be believed and practiced by christians under the gospel, because this doctrine was taught and believed under the law? How many have argued in favor of a lineal succession of gospel ministers from the apostles to this day, because there was a lineal succession of the priesthood under the law? How many have argued in favor of three orders in the gospel ministry, because there were three orders in the ministry under the law; namely, Levites, priests, and high priests? How many have argued in favor of an ecclesiastical hierarchy in the Christian church, because there was such a hierarchy in the Jewish church, which had the supreme government of it? How many have argued in favor of dedicating new meeting houses, because Solomon's temple was dedicated? How many have argued in favor of minister's officiating in sacerdotal robes, after the manner of the Jewish priests? Papists, Protestants, Episcopalians, Dissenters, and Congregationalists have been disposed, more or less, to reason in this manner from the Mosaic to the Christian dispensation; but all such reasoning is vain and inconclusive under the gospel dispensation. The Jews were taught passive obedience and non-resistance to their civil rulers, because they lived under a theocracy, or government of God, who appointed their civil rulers and gave them their civil authority. But the highest, as well as the lowest civil rulers, under the gospel dispensation, derive all their authority from their fellow men, and not from God; and therefore those who gave them authority, may take it away, and refuse to obey them, when they make laws which are unjust, unscriptural, oppressive, and tyrannical. There was a lineal succession in the priesthood under the law. No

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man could be a high priest, unless he could prove that he lineally descended from the family of Aaron; and no man could be a priest, or Levite officially, unless he could prove that he lineally descended from the tribe of Levi. You remember, that after the Jews returned from the Babylonish captivity, numbers were set aside from their priesthood, because they could not prove, from an authentic register, their lineal succession in the priest's office. But under the gospel, the ministerial office is not confined to a person of any particular family, or particular nation; and therefore the Papists and Episcopalians are grossly erroneous in maintaining, that no man has a right to officiate as a minister of the gospel, unless he can prove that he has been ordained by one who was ordained by another, in a lineal succession from the apostles. Under the law, the high priest was the supreme officer in the church of God, but we find no such officer appointed in the church of God under the gospel. The pope, therefore, is extremely arrogant and presumptuous in claiming to be the supreme head of the Christian church, without any divine appointment; as though he were successor to the high priest in the Jewish church. The Episcopalians seem to imagine that there must be three distinct officers in the church under the gospel, because there were three distinct officers in the church under the law, who managed all ecclesiastical affairs, independently of all the private members of the church. Just so the Episcopalians have their bishops, priests, and deacons, who claim and exercise all ecclesiastical power, totally independent of the brotherhood. These bishops also claim authority to decree all rites, forms, or modes of public worship. And it was the exercise of this arbitrary power that brought about the separation between the Dissenters and the Episcopalians; and that constrained our forefathers to flee from their native country, to this then land of barbarians. Such great and fatal errors, both in church and state, have flowed and continue to flow, from the absurd and fallacious mode of reasoning from the Mosaic dispensation, which has been completely abrogated by the gospel dispensation. If christians would only see and avoid this palpable absurdity, it would prepare the way for the removal of Popery, Episcopalianism, Presbyterianism, and all tyranny in church and state.

6. If the Christian dispensation has completely superseded and abolished the Mosaic, then it is a great favor to live under the Christian dispensation. This has unfolded the great mysteries which lay hid under the dark dispensation of the law. Many of the truths of the gospel were covered and obscured by the various rites, ceremonies, and typical sacrifices under the legal dispensation; they were mere shadows and not the sub-

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stance of the great truths, and good things to be made manifest by the gospel. The Jews had but a very imperfect knowledge of their own dispensation; they did not look through the design of those rites, and ceremonies, and sacrifices, which they daily and yearly observed, and which prefigured the atonement of Christ and the great doctrines which were connected with it. But since the day-spring from on high hath visited us, and Christ has come and taken away the legal, and established the gospel dispensation, the great mysteries which lay hid for ages have been clearly unfolded, and we can read the Old Testament with an open and unveiled face, which casts a flood of light upon the New Testament. If the Jews were highly favored and distinguished from the heathen, by having the oracles of God contained in the law, then we are much more distinguished from both Jews and Gentiles, by having the oracles of God contained in the gospel put into our hands. It deeply concerns all real christians to prize and improve the precious privileges of the gospel, by which they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Those who live under the gospel, have vastly greater advantages, and better means of gaining the knowledge of God, and of Christ, and of all the invisible things of the invisible world, than those had, who lived under the dark dispensation of the law. And common christians may now know much more about Christ, heaven and hell, than even the prophets and most eminent saints knew, before the gospel day. For these distinguishing privileges, christians ought to be thankful; and if they are thankful, they will faithfully improve them to the glory of God, and to their own spiritual and eternal benefit. There were but a very few Jews that could attend the temple service every Sabbath. But christians "have no such lengths to go" to behold the beauty of the Lord in his sanctuary.

7. It appears from what has been said, that sinners are much more criminal for rejecting the gospel under the Christian dispensation, than those were, who rejected it under the Mosaic dispensation. The gospel was preached to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to all the Jews under the law; but it was wrapt up in a multitude of mysterious ceremonies which it was difficult to explain and understand; and those who rejected it, generally rejected it through much ignorance. But those who live under the light of the gospel, have no ground to plead ignorance. Hence Christ told the unbelievers in his day, "Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father." The apostle represented unbelief under the gospel, as far more criminal than under the law. The apostle demands, "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and

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disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" And he solemnly declares, "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

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SERMON LXXVI.

PLATFORM OF ECCLESIASTICAL GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man, and a publican. — Matthew, xviii. 15, 16, 17.

Our Saviour, in the beginning of this chapter, exhorts his followers to become humble and harmless as little children, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." He next warns the world against abusing his harmless and inoffensive disciples. "Wo unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but wo to that man by whom the offence cometh!" He then directs his followers how they should conduct under the offences which they may receive from the world. And immediately after this, he proceeds to direct christians what steps they must take, to settle difficulties and maintain peace and purity among themselves. "Moreover, if thy brother," (not one of the world,) "trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; and if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." This passage of

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scripture suggests several things which deserve a distinct and serious consideration. Accordingly, I propose,

I. To consider the materials of which a church of Christ is formed;

II. To consider how these materials are formed into a church of Christ; and,

III. To consider what power or authority Christ has given to his church after it is regularly formed.

I. Let us consider the materials of which a church of Christ is formed.

There is a visible and invisible church. The invisible church comprehends all real saints, or all of mankind who will be finally sanctified and saved. But by a visible church we are to understand a society of visible saints. By visible saints are meant such as profess to be real saints, and appear to be so in the eye of Christian charity. Such persons as these are the materials of which a church of Christ is formed. None were admitted into the church under the Mosaic dispensation, but those who made a public profession of real grace, or true love to God. All that belonged to that church, solemnly avouched the Lord to be their God, and engaged to love him with all their hearts, and to obey all his commands, which rendered them visible saints in the judgment of charity. And as to the gospel church, it is plain that it was composed of none but visible saints. No other but baptized persons were admitted to communion; and no adult persons but such as professed repentance and faith, were admitted to baptism; which shows that they were visible saints. Of such materials was the church of Corinth composed; for the apostle speaks to them as saints by profession. "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." And he inscribes his epistle to the church of Ephesus in similar language. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." These inscriptions plainly suppose that the apostles considered the various churches which they had planted in different places, as visible saints, or professed friends and followers of Christ. Accordingly, Peter, in his epistle to the churches in general, addresses them under the character of real saints. "Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Here all the churches, in the days of the apostles, are represented as composed of living members; such as were renewed, sanctified, and made meet for the Master's use. They were

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living branches of Christ the living vine, or living members of Christ the living head. But such materials, while separate and unconnected, do not constitute a church of Christ, any more than the materials of Solomon's temple were a temple, before they were collected and framed into that sacred building by the hands of artificers. This leads us to consider,

II. How the materials that have been mentioned, are formed into a church of Christ.

The materials must be prepared before they can be formed into this spiritual building. You remember that all the materials for the temple were prepared before they were collected; and when they were collected, there was nothing to do but to put them together in that beautiful form which was divinely prescribed. In this respect, I apprehend, the temple was intended to be a type of the church, as well as of the incarnation of Christ. For the materials of a gospel church are all to be fitted and prepared by divine grace, before they are collected and formed into a spiritual building. It was certainly so in the days of the apostles. They prepared materials before they erected churches. They went from place to place and preached the gospel; and as many as professed to believe the gospel and were baptized, and being of a competent number, they formed into a distinct church. But *how* did they form churches? and how are churches now to be formed? or what is it that constitutes a number of visible saints a proper church? I answer, a *mutual covenant*. It is by confederation that a number of individual christians become a visible church of Christ. A number of professing christians cannot be formed into a church without their freely and mutually covenanting to walk together in all the duties and ordinances of the gospel. They may be real and visible saints while they remain unconnected and separate; but they cannot be a proper church, without entering into covenant, and laying themselves under certain obligations to each other, to live and act like christians. And as this is a point of great importance in the present discourse, I shall offer several considerations to support it.

1. Confederation is the band of union among civil societies, and analogy requires the same band of union in a religious society. Civil government is founded in compact. Individuals are not a civil society, until they have formed themselves into one, by an explicit or implicit compact, agreement, or covenant. Before they have laid themselves under a mutual engagement, they are unconnected individuals, and have no power or authority over one another. But after they have freely and voluntarily entered into a compact or covenant to live and conduct towards one another according to certain laws, rules and regu-

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lations, they become a civil society, vested with civil power and authority. And it is only by confederation, that individual christians can form themselves into a church, and bind themselves to walk together according to the rules of the gospel.

2. It is universally allowed that a church of Christ have a right to watch over and discipline their own members. But individual christians, before they are formed into a church state, have no such power over one another. They may indeed reprove or exhort one another privately; but they have no right to call any one to account, and censure him for breaking the laws of Christ, publicly and authoritatively. But after they have engaged to watch over one another, and discipline one another for scandalous offences, then each individual becomes bound to submit to the reproof, admonition and censure of the whole body. His obligation to submit arises from the bond of the covenant which he has made. I may add,

3. That nothing besides a covenant can give form to a church, or be a sufficient bond of union. Mere Christian affection cannot. Though all Christian churches ought to be connected by the bond of brotherly love, yet this alone is not sufficient to make a number of christians a church of Christ. This bond of union runs through all the Christian world, and cordially unites real christians of all denominations, though divided into various distinct societies. This common bond of union cannot be the principal bond of union in any particular church. Nor is cohabitation a sufficient bond of union in a congregational church. A number of christians merely living in the same city, town, or parish, does not make them a church. Nor do they become a church, by usually meeting together for social or public worship. Nor does baptism constitute a person a member of any particular church. Many of those strangers in Jerusalem, who were baptized on the day of Pentecost, probably never saw one another again after they left Jerusalem, so that their baptism could not make them members of any particular church. Thus it appears that a number of christians may form themselves into a proper church or religious society, by a mutual covenant to walk together in all the commands and ordinances of the gospel. It still remains to consider,

III. What power or authority belongs to a particular church. It is granted by all, that every particular church has some ecclesiastical power. And since a particular church is formed by compact or covenant, it hence appears that a particular church does not derive its power from the church universal, but directly from Christ, the source of all ecclesiastical authority. We shall, therefore, consider it as an established point, that each

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particular church is possessed of ecclesiastical power; and of course we have only to inquire what kind of power is lodged in a particular church.

And as to this, I would observe in general that it is only *executive* power. Christ is the sole lawgiver in the church. He has made all the laws by which it is to be governed. He has delegated no legislative power to a church, by which it has authority to make ecclesiastical laws or canons. The church of Rome has manifested herself to be anti-christian, by claiming and exercising such a power. No particular church whatever has a right to make a single law or canon to bind its members. It has only the right to execute the law which Christ has made and published in the gospel. These laws are summarily comprised in the words of our text, and are abundantly sufficient, if properly and faithfully executed, to preserve the existence, and to promote the edification and purity of the church. So much power every church needs, in order to prevent its crumbling to pieces, and to prevent or cure any corruptions and disorders that may arise in it. But to be more particular, I would observe,

1. That every church has a right to admit members into their own Christian communion, according to the rules of the gospel. It is essential to every voluntary society to admit whom they please into their number. They are the proper and competent judges to determine who are worthy or unworthy to be admitted. It would be very irrational to suppose that any particular church is obliged to admit every one that offers to join their holy communion. They have an undoubted right to judge of the qualifications of proponents, and receive or reject them, according to an impartial judgment of Christian charity. This right they never ought to give up.

2. A church has a right to watch over and reprove one another in private. This right they have voluntarily given to each other by their mutual covenant. They might, indeed, have done this in a friendly manner, if they had not engaged to do it; but after they have engaged to do it, they have a right to watch over and reprove one another authoritatively, when they see any member visibly depart from the precepts or prohibitions of the gospel. This is Christ's direction in the text. "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." And the apostle directs christians to "exhort one another daily, lest any should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

3. A church has a right to discipline its members for unchristian conduct, by admonition and excommunication. This authority is expressly given to them by Christ himself in the

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words of our text. "Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." This is all the ecclesiastical authority that Christ has given to any particular church; and this is only executive authority. As soon as any competent number of christians have voluntarily united and bound themselves together, by confederation, to walk together and attend divine ordinances, they are a regular gospel church, and invested with all ecclesiastical power. But after they are regularly formed into a church, they still need to be organized, which they have an independent power to do for themselves. Every civil society has an inherent right to organize its own government, by choosing and installing its own officers. The same essential right every regularly formed church has, to organize its own ecclesiastical government, by choosing and installing its own officers. This commonwealth have a right to organize their own government, and this they do every year, by choosing their own officers, and appointing the lieutenant governor, or some other magistrate, to administer the oaths of office to the governor and other state officers, whom they have chosen. He, or they, who administer the oaths of office, do not convey any of their own power, but only the power of the state, to those to whom they administer the qualifying oaths. Just so the members of a church have a right to organize their own ecclesiastical government, by choosing and installing their own officers. They have a right to choose deacons, and then to ordain them as they judge most scriptural. And they have the same right to choose their own ministers, and after that, to instal them into office. For ordination is nothing more than installing a minister into office. The ordainers do not convey any authority of their own, but only the authority of Christ, through the medium of the church, to the man they ordain, by which he is duly qualified to preach the doctrines, and administer the ordinances of the gospel to his own people, and wherever he is called in providence to execute his ministerial office, with which Christ has invested him. I know that many suppose that the power of ordination is lodged in the hands of the clergy, independently of the church; and that this power has been handed down, in a lineal succession of ordained ministers, from the days of the apostles to this day. But this is a very groundless opinion. For the line of succession has been

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often broken. It was broken in the time of Luther. He was excommunicated by the Pope, and all his ministerial authority taken away. It has been broken once and again in Britain. This Bishop Hoadly and all moderate clergymen acknowledge. It has been broken in this country; for the first ministers who came here, renounced all Episcopal authority, and in one or two instances, stood by, and saw a minister ordained by the brethren of the church.* Besides, there is something very absurd in the supposition that ordained ministers have the sole right of ordaining others. Upon this supposition, let a particular church be ever so pure and orthodox, and choose an able and orthodox preacher to settle with them, they cannot have him for their pastor unless ministers are pleased to ordain him. This throws all the churches into the hands of ministers; and can we suppose that Christ meant to deprive churches of their inherent right to choose and install their own officers? What would have become of the dissenters in England, if they had had no right to choose and install their own ministers? What would have become of the churches in New England, if they had not had the right of choosing and installing their own ministers? They would not have had one regular gospel minister to this day. And on this ground, the high church clergy, such as Bishop Hobart of New York, maintain that there is not one regular Congregational minister in this country, who has a right to ordain others, or to administer Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The truth is, ministers have no exclusive right to ordain others. The right of ordination is primarily and solely in the hands of the church. And when ministers do ordain, it is because they are invited and appointed by the church to do it. Thus the church has a right, after it is formed by confederation, to organize itself by choosing and installing such officers as Christ has appointed; and these are bishops and deacons, and no other. There are but two orders of officers in the Christian church. There were three orders in the Jewish church, high priest, priests and Levites. But in a Christian church, there are only two distinct officers, bishops and deacons. And bishop, in the apostolic times, was a mere pastor, teacher, or watchman, without any superiority or power over any of his fellow pastors. He had only the watch, and care, and instruction of the particular church in which he was placed. No modern minister is a bishop, (*jure divino*,) but a mere creature of the state, and destitute of all divine authority to exercise dominion over any regular, gospel minister. In the twentieth of Acts we read, "From Miletus Paul sent to Ephe-

* See Winthrop's History of New England, vol. i. pp. 114, 115.

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sus, and called the elders of the church," and said unto them, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Overseers in this passage is translated from the word ἐπισκόπους in Greek, which properly signifies *watchmen*. The elders of Ephesus, whom the apostle calls bishops, were mere ministers of churches, who had no right to watch over one another, but only over the particular church and congregation over which God had made each of them a distinct pastor. That there were only two orders of officers in a primitive Christian church, appears from Paul's inscription in his epistle to the Philippians. It is in these words: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, *with the bishops and deacons*." That is, with the pastors and deacons, who were the only officers in that church.

When a number of visible saints have formed themselves into a church by confederation, and have organized it, by choosing and installing a pastor and deacons, they are become a regular Christian church, and are prepared to exercise every act of ecclesiastical power, according to the directions which Christ has given them in our text. This is the only code of laws which Christ has given to any church, in order to maintain their own peace and purity, harmony and edification. The steps specified in this code of laws, the church are bound to take, in every act of discipline towards their brethren. Every church has an inherent right to discipline its own members, without consulting any pastor, or church, or presbytery, or synod, or council, or bishop, or pope, on the face of the earth. Councils, presbyteries, synods and general assemblies, are of mere human device, and have no ecclesiastical authority over any individual gospel church. It is at the option and discretion of any particular church, whether they shall, or shall not ask counsel in any case of church discipline; and if they do ask counsel of others, their advice is only advisory, which they have a right to accept or reject. If we depart from the platform of church discipline, which Christ has given us in this eighteenth chapter of Matthew, there is nothing in scripture to prevent our being Presbyterians, or Episcopalians, or Papists.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If every church be formed by confederation, and has an independent right to exercise all ecclesiastical power, then they have a right to dismiss their own minister, whenever they judge he has forfeited his ministerial character. As the church have a

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right to choose and ordain their own minister, so they must have, of course, a right to dismiss him for what they deem good reasons. Those who have a right to put into office, have a right to put out of office. The church either puts their ministers into office, or delegate power to neighboring ministers to do it for them, which is the same thing as doing it themselves. Therefore, as neighboring ministers could not place a pastor over them without their consent, so they cannot put away, or dismiss their pastor without their consent. The voice of the church must always be had in every act of discipline. Now if a council cannot dismiss a minister without the consent of the church, then it clearly appears that the right of dismission belongs solely to the church, who may dismiss their minister without the advice, or contrary to the advice of a council, if they think he has forfeited his ministerial character, but not otherwise. Before he was ordained, he was a mere candidate for office; and whilst he stood in that predicament, they had a right to dismiss him from their service, if they were displeased with his voice, his style, or any other mere personal defect, and call another upon trial. But after he is ordained, he no longer stands in the situation of a candidate; and the church have no longer a right to dismiss him, unless they judge he is so heterodox in sentiment, or corrupt in practice, as to be unqualified for the sacred work of the ministry. If a church dismiss a minister without his consent, they must dismiss him as a man unfit for the pastoral office in any other place, and refuse to recommend him. The connection between a pastor and people is too sacred and important to be dissolved upon every trifling mistake on either side.

2. It appears from the nature of church government, that a pastor has no right to negative the votes of the church. This right has been too often claimed and exercised by congregational ministers. But there is no ground in reason, or scripture, for this arbitrary power. The church, we have seen, is only an executive body, who have no power to make laws, but only to execute the laws which Christ has made and given them. It is absurd to suppose that an executive body should have a negative upon one another. The chief judge of the supreme court has no negative on the side judges, nor they upon him; for this plain reason, that they must bring the matter before them to a decision. But this could not be if they had a negative upon each other. So in a church, if a pastor could negative their votes, he might prevent them from bringing any cause to a decision. If the pastor might negative all the votes and doings of the church, they would really have no power at all, and never be able to determine any point, or decide any cause. The truth is, he is but a mere moderator; and in respect to voting, stands

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upon the same ground with a private brother. If the church vote any thing contrary to his opinion, he may object, like any other member, but is bound *ex-officio*, to put the vote, without personally approving it. Or, if the church should pass a sentence of such a nature and so circumstanced that he thinks himself bound in duty to do all in his power to obstruct the execution of the sentence, he may refuse to put the vote, and relinquish his office. No man is obliged to violate his conscience in any office he sustains. If a sheriff were required to execute a man whom he knew to be innocent, he might refuse to act, at the risk of his office. The minister has no more controlling power over the church, than a speaker of the house of representatives has over that house; and that house has no more controlling power over the speaker, than he has over them. So the church is a mere executive body, and the minister is a mere executive officer. Neither the church, nor the pastor has any other power, but to execute the laws of Christ according to his directions in the text. Ecclesiastical power is one of the plainest things in nature; and had churches and ministers only followed the directions of Christ in our text, there never would have been any disputes and controversies about ecclesiastical authority, or about councils, presbyteries, synods, bishops, patriarchs, or popes. These are not to be found in the eighteenth of Matthew, and consequently not in the New Testament. They are mere human inventions, and contrary to scripture. The church is a mere executive body, and have no power to do any thing, but only to execute the laws of Christ according to his plain directions in this eighteenth of Matthew. All the present disputes about councils mutual, and *ex-parte* councils, in respect to their authority, are vain and useless; because they have no divine authority at all. And all the present disputes about the power of ordination, and the power of ordained ministers, are equally vain and absurd. For there is no power of ordination but what is lodged in every church of Christ; and no church of Christ can give any power to their officers, but what Christ has given to every one of his ministers. The disputes about ecclesiastical power never will be, nor can be settled, until the churches will return to the platform of ecclesiastical power contained in our text, from which not only Papists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, but even Congregationalists, have too far departed.

3. Since every church is formed by its own voluntary confederation, one church is neither superior, nor inferior to another in point of authority; but every church is entirely independent. There is no other necessary bond of union between individual churches, but brotherly love. This, all Christian churches ought to exercise towards one another. Any

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number of professing christians may form themselves into a church by confederation, and exercise all ecclesiastical power among themselves, without any special connection with, or dependence on, any other church in the world. All ecclesiastical authority comes from Christ, and not from any particular church or churches. One church has as much power as another. All churches are sisters, and stand upon a level. They may associate, or consociate for mutual advantage. But no church have a right to give up their power to an association, or consociation, or council, or any other ecclesiastical body. Churches have no right to unite for the purpose of concentrating and increasing their ecclesiastical authority. An association, or consociation, or council, have no more power than any single churches of which those bodies are composed. But it seems to be a very general opinion that churches can concentrate and increase their power by union. It is upon this principle of union, that a presbytery is supposed to have more power than a single church; that a synod has more power than a single presbytery; that the general assembly has more power than a single synod; and that the pope at the head of what is called the universal church, has more power than all other ministers and churches in the world. If the premises are granted, these consequences must follow. If churches may concentrate and increase their power by union, then an association may have more power than a single church; a consociation may have more power than an association; a synod may have more power than a presbytery; a general assembly may have more power than a synod; and the church universal, with his Holiness at their head, may have more power than all other churches and all other clergymen in the world. Congregationalists often complain of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Papists, on account of their church government; but they have no reason to complain; for they act upon precisely the same principle, when they concentrate and increase their ecclesiastical power by union with associations, consociations, and ecclesiastical councils. When any church gives up its independence to any other ecclesiastical body, it gives up all its power. But Christ has given no power to churches which they may give away. Congregational churches, at this day, ought to be on their guard, and strenuously maintain their independence.

4. It appears from the very nature of church government, that there is no appeal from the authority of a particular church to any higher ecclesiastical tribunal. Every church have a right to transact all their ecclesiastical matters, independently of any other church. When they undertake to discipline any member, they have a right to pursue the steps which Christ has

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pointed out, and continue the process, until they have brought the matter to a final conclusion. This is agreeable to Christ's platform of church government. "Moreover, if thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Christ here gives no direction to the censured person to appeal to any higher tribunal to take off the censure, nor to the church to call a council for advice. The censured person has no right to appeal to any higher ecclesiastical tribunal for relief, because there is no higher ecclesiastical tribunal on earth to which he can appeal; and the church have no right to submit their decision to the decision of any higher tribunal. But what if the church should misjudge and censure a man unjustly, is there no way to rectify their mistake? If the man feels himself injured, he may ask the church to reconsider the case, and they may comply with his request. Or he may ask them to call a council, and lay his case before a council; and they may comply with his request. But what if they do reconsider his case, and not reverse their decision? or what if they do call a council, which advises them to reverse their decision, but they will not follow their advice? Is there no other way for him to find relief? None at all. There must be a final decision, and the church must make it. But is not this hard? It must be allowed that it is hard. But no harder than if his case were referred to a council, and they should not advise the church to reverse their decision; or than if his case should be referred to a second, or third, or ever so many councils, and all advise the church to confirm their decision. There must be a stop somewhere; and it may be as well that the stop should be in the church, as in any other ecclesiastical body; and better, for Christ himself has directed the church to put an end to the process. But after all, the man may be injured. That is true; and no man has reason to expect that justice will always be done him, in this erroneous world. The human device of giving power to associations, or consociations, or councils, to decide in ecclesiastical causes, has been a fruitful source of ecclesiastical injustice, tyranny, and persecution. The plain and simple congregational mode of deciding ecclesiastical causes and difficulties, is far the easiest, wisest, and best. No ecclesiastical decision ought to be taken out of the hands of a particular church, where Christ has lodged it; for he has appointed no

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ecclesiastical tribunal superior to that of an individual church, to which either the body, or members of a church may appeal.

5. Every mode of church government is destructive of the rights and liberties of every christian church, except strict Congregationalism. Presbyterianism is destructive of the independence of every Christian church, and robs it of all the power and authority which Christ has given it. No Presbyterian church has a right to invite a candidate to preach among them, without the consent of the presbytery. And after they have invited him, and are willing to settle him, they cannot get him ordained without the consent of the presbytery. And if he should be corrupt in sentiment or practice, they could not discipline him according to the steps that Christ has pointed out. He would first appeal to the presbytery, and if they should condemn him, he would appeal to the synod; and if they should condemn him, he could appeal to the general assembly, which might be hundreds of miles from his people; and if they should justify him, his people could have no relief. It is easy to see that this mode of church government is destructive to the rights of any particular church. So is Episcopalianism. An Episcopalian church has no independence; the government of it is in the hands of archbishops, bishops, and other inferior clergy. You know that all the protestant world have loudly complained and justly, of the ecclesiastical tyranny of the church of Rome; which has destroyed the independence of all the churches of the popish religion. Every mode of church government, except strict Congregationalism, is hostile to that perfect platform of church government which Christ has given us in the eighteenth of Matthew; and is more or less tyrannical. These human hierarchies, which have been the source of immense evils in the christian world, ought to be destroyed; and they will undoubtedly be destroyed in the time of the Millennium. They are the bulwarks of error, delusion and every species of moral corruption, and must be purged out of the Christian world, before the church can become universally pure and flourish. We have long been praying for the downfall of unchristian power and tyranny in the church of Rome; and we ought to pray for the downfall of every degree of that unchristian power in every other church in the world.

6. This subject shows the superior excellency of that ecclesiastical government, which Christ has appointed in his church. It is neither monarchical, like the church of Rome, nor aristocratical, like the presbyterian church; but a pure democracy, which places every member of the church upon a level, and gives him perfect liberty with order. If any one commits an offence, he is to be tried by his peers, by his christian friends,

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and by the whole ecclesiastical body to which he belongs. The whole plan of government is founded in benevolence; and every step in the execution of it is to be taken in benevolence. The first step of discipline is perfectly benevolent and friendly. The offended brother is to treat the offender in a kind, tender, benevolent manner, by telling him his fault in private, and endeavoring to bring about a cordial reconciliation. But if he fails of obtaining his friendly object in this first step, he is not allowed to bring the offender before the church in a rash and precipitate manner. He must take one or two with him, to act the part of grand jurymen, and determine whether there is ground to bring the cause before the church. If they say there is not sufficient cause to bring the matter before the church, he cannot bring it. This step is perfectly benevolent, and designed to prevent any vexatious complaint from being brought into the church. Or if the case is brought before the church, the offender has a fair trial by his peers and the whole body of his christian friends, and not by the pastor, or one or two brethren, who might possibly be prejudiced against him; and he has no right to think that the whole church are prejudiced against him. If they condemn him, therefore, he has reason to believe that they have acted from pure, benevolent motives, and with a friendly design to bring him to repentance. And to such a sentence, whether correct or incorrect, he ought cordially to submit, and properly improve it.

Now if any should think, that there is something severe and unbenevolent in Christ's directing the church to treat the excommunicated person as an heathen man and publican, it may be proper to explain the meaning of that direction. We are not, perhaps, to understand it, as some have understood it, to forbid the members of the church to eat and drink with an excommunicated man at common meals, or to treat him with the common marks of civility. It only requires them to treat him as a man of the world, and withdraw from him all Christian fellowship and communion. This, and every other step of discipline, is exactly suited to bring the offender to repentance and reformation, and to save his soul from death. It is a dark mark against professors of religion, that they are generally so backward to discharge the duty of gospel discipline towards their offending brethren. By this neglect, they may suffer the leaven of corruption to spread gradually, until it has leavened the whole lump, and ruined the whole church. Let professors keep themselves in the love of God, and purge the beams out of their own eyes, that they may see clearly to purge the motes out of their brother's eye. Perform this duty properly, and you will have the approbation of Christ, of the reproved and reformed of the world, and of your

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own consciences. And now please to remember, that your peace, purity and edification unitedly bind you, *to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free;* and maintain your original congregational principles in opposition to every other mode of church government; and especially against Presbyterianism, which so many ministers throughout the United States, are so zealously engaged to promote. If they should tell you that Christ has not instituted any particular form of church government, refer them to the eighteenth of Matthew, which ought to silence them. But if they deny that any platform of government is there instituted, ask them to show you the passage, or the passages in the New Testament, in which christians are required to exercise any kind of ecclesiastical authority, or discipline over one another. No man can tell. All who depart from Christ's platform of church government, make one of their own, which must be unscriptural, unreasonable and tyrannical. This has been, for ages, confirmed by all the persecutions to which christians have been subjected. All persecutions have originated from ecclesiastical tyranny. But it is impossible for persecution to arise in strictly Congregational churches. They inflict no civil penalties on delinquents. Their discipline terminates in excommunication. Maintain Congregational discipline, and you are safe, but not otherwise.

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SERMON LXXVII.

A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION.

One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. — Isaiah, xliv. 5.

This chapter begins with a prediction of the future prosperity and increase of the church of God. "Now hear, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen. Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring. And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Here is a representation of a large and copious effusion of the divine Spirit upon persons of all ages, but more especially upon the young, who resemble the flowers that adorn the face of the earth. And it is plainly intimated that this divine influence should produce one and the same happy effect upon the hearts and conduct of all who should be the subjects of it. It should dispose them to make a public profession of religion, and bind themselves to be the Lord's for ever. And since the same cause will naturally produce the same effect, we may justly conclude,

That those who become the subjects of special grace, will choose to join the church, and enter into covenant to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. I shall,

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I. Describe the subjects of special grace.

II. Show what is implied in their professing religion, or entering into covenant with God; and,

III. Show why they will choose to join the church, and enter into covenant with God.

I. I am to describe the subjects of special grace. We often speak of the common and special influence of the divine Spirit. The most thoughtless, stupid, unawakened sinners are the subjects of the common influence of the divine Spirit. It was by his common influence, that he strove with the old world before they were overthrown and destroyed. It was by his common influence, that he strove with the sinners in Zion in the days of their deep declension. And it is by his common influence, that he now strives with sinners in general. There are scarcely any sinners, but what are, more or less, the subjects of the common influence of the Spirit. He often restrains, reproves and condemns them, by various means on various occasions. Almost every Sabbath, and even every day, he awakens some momentary fear or conviction in their minds. But these common momentary alarms make no abiding impressions on their minds, because they are able to resist such weak and momentary strivings of the Spirit. And though he sometimes strives more powerfully and constantly, yet so long as he does not produce any radical or essential change in the nature of their moral exercises, they continue to resist and stifle convictions, and maintain their enmity, opposition and selfishness. The common influence of the Spirit never produces the least degree of grace in the heart. This has always appeared, when God has poured the largest effusions of the Spirit. Multitudes were awakened under John the Baptist's preaching, under Christ's preaching, and under the apostles' preaching, who never repented, and embraced and professed the gospel. They were the subjects of only the common influence of the Spirit, which produced no saving change in their hearts. But when God operates by his special influence, he not only awakens and convinces sinners, but slays the enmity of their hearts, by producing new and holy exercises, and turning them from selfishness to pure, disinterested love to God. The subjects of his special grace become new creatures. Their stony heart is taken away, and a new heart is given them. They become new creatures. Old things pass away and all things become new. They love God whom they hated, and hate sin which they loved. They renounce the things of the world, the men of the world, and the spirit of the world. They experience the fruits of the Spirit; which are love, joy, peace, gentleness, faith, meekness, and every holy and virtuous affec-

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tion. Such are the characters of true converts, or the subjects of special, saving grace. I now proceed to show,

II. What is implied in their professing religion, or entering into covenant to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. They are represented, in the text, as making a public profession of religion, and ratifying their profession by subscribing a covenant, or some solemn obligation to fulfil their engagements to the Lord. The public profession of religion under the Mosaic dispensation was a covenant transaction, in which God and his people mutually stipulated to perform certain conditions. The people stipulated to love God with all the heart, and to obey all his commands. They avouched him to be their God, or solemnly declared themselves to be the Lord's; and he avouched them to be his people, and engaged to be their God. This mutual stipulation was considered and called an oath. The people are represented as swearing unto the Lord, and he as confirming the immutability of his promise by an oath, which it was impossible for him to violate. Though covenanting with God, at this day, is not attended with the same circumstances that attended covenanting with God under the law, yet it is essentially the same, and creates a bond or obligation equally and mutually binding. Those who now make a public profession of religion, consecrate themselves and all that they have to God, and solemnly engage to take his word as the standard of their faith and practice, and at the same time call themselves christians, and virtually, if not literally, subscribe with their own hands to walk in universal obedience to the divine laws and ordinances. It is said that the primitive christians gave themselves to the Lord, and professed a good profession before many witnesses. They professed godliness, which was a good profession, and contained every thing implied in vital piety. In this public and solemn transaction, they appealed to God and man to witness the truth and sincerity of their profession, which was tantamount to a solemn oath. Such is the proper nature and solemnity of making a public profession of religion, and entering into covenant with God at this day. It now remains to show,

III. Why the subjects of special grace choose to join the church and enter into covenant with God. The prophet represents young converts as spontaneously choosing to make a public profession of religion, and to bind themselves to be the Lord's. They choose to make it known that they belong to the people of God, and to put themselves under the bond of the covenant to walk in the way of his commandments. This has been generally found by observation and experience to be the happy fruit and effect of a saving change or sound conversion. The

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question now before us is, Why do such young converts spontaneously desire and choose to join the church, and lay themselves under covenant vows and obligations to live in universal and persevering obedience to the whole will of God? There is a variety of weighty and powerful reasons for their freely and voluntarily binding themselves to be the Lord's. In particular,

1. They love the commands of God. A change of heart always produces love to the law of God, or it rather consists in love to the divine law, which is a condition of the covenant of grace. So the apostle says in the eighth of Hebrews. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." Paul said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." And David said, "O how love I thy law." As soon as the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, it never fails to produce love to his law. And those who love his law, choose to obey it, and to bind themselves to obey it for ever. This was exemplified in the views and conduct of the converts that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; going and weeping, they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." The subjects of special grace have had their enmity to the divine law slain, and of course love that law which they hated, and choose to love and obey it for ever; which is one good reason why they choose to join themselves to the Lord and to his people.

2. They love the ordinances as well as the law of God. They love religion, and all the instituted duties of it, which they once neglected and despised. They love to draw near to God in secret and social prayer, and in his public worship in his house. And for the same reason, they desire to commemorate the death of their divine Redeemer according to his dying command, "This do in remembrance of me." Though this be an appropriate duty of the subjects of grace, yet they have no right to attend upon this special ordinance, before they profess Christ before men, and bind themselves to walk with his friends in obedience to his commands, by a solemn and perpetual covenant. The positive and instituted duties of religion are calculated and designed for the benefit of the cordial friends of Christ; and as soon as any become his friends, they

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sincerely desire to name his name, and join with his followers in celebrating his special ordinances. This was the case of those who were converted on the day of Pentecost. We read, "Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The same desire to join with the people of God, and to partake of the holy sacrament, is a common effect which flows from the special effusions of the divine Spirit. Young converts never fail to flock to Christ as doves to their windows. They spontaneously desire to join the church, and to bind themselves to walk in all the ordinances of the Lord.

3. The subjects of special grace choose to join the church, because their hearts are united to christians. Though they once despised and avoided christians, yet as soon as they possess the spirit of Christ, they feel a peculiar complacency towards his friends, and delight to unite with them in the duties of religion, and in their attendance on divine ordinances. Those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, were of one heart and of one soul, and united and continued together in social worship, and the celebration of divine ordinances. The subjects of special grace possess a spirit of mutual brotherly love. They love as brethren, and discern a peculiar beauty and excellence in all that love the Lord. This Christian union and affection is not momentary, but permanent and universal. It extends to all who appear to be the subjects of special grace. David loved, esteemed and delighted in the saints, as the excellent of the earth. The apostle John says, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Love to christians is commonly one of the first sensible effects of a saving change, and of the peculiar evidences of it, without which, the same apostle says, no other evidence is to be relied on; "for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" As all the subjects of special grace sincerely love the church composed of the subjects of grace, so they naturally desire to join the church, and maintain a spiritual union and communion with the church in all gospel ordinances.

4. Those who possess the grace of God in truth, desire to promote his cause and interest in the world. They ardently desire that his cause may prevail, and his kingdom may grow and flourish, and fill the earth. And they desire to be workers together with him in building up his kingdom, and for this reason wish to put themselves in the best situation, and under the strongest obligations to promote the cause of truth and the prosperity of Zion. David calls upon the friends of God to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and declares with respect to

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himself, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Though young converts may do something to promote the cause of God, before they make a public profession of religion, yet by making a public profession of their faith and love, they can do much more to promote his cause, and lay themselves under stronger obligations to do it. Their profession gives them a greater freedom, and creates a greater obligation to speak and act for God and the good of their fellow men. Besides, by joining the church, they increase their number, strengthen their hands, cement their union, and augment their zeal and resolution to promote virtue and piety, and to suppress every thing that obstructs the salutary effects of divine truth and divine ordinances. Young converts have good ground to expect that they shall derive these great advantages and opportunities of doing good, by joining the church; and therefore they wish to name the name of Christ, that they may be better able to promote his cause and kingdom. They ought to be more concerned to do good than to get good, by professing religion and binding themselves to promote it. But the great enemy of God and religion often tries all his artifice, to prevent them from uniting with its friends to do good, by exciting in their minds groundless fears that they shall endanger the salvation of their own souls if they attend the sacrament, where men may eat and drink damnation unto themselves. But supreme love to God and a zeal according to knowledge, will banish such fears, and sweetly constrain them to do their duty, and leave the event with God.

5. Those who are the subjects of special grace, desire to grow in grace; and for that reason desire to join the church, that they may enjoy the best means of spiritual edification and growth in grace. They desire the sincere milk of the word, and the nourishment of divine ordinances, that they may grow thereby. All divine ordinances are designed and calculated to promote the spiritual benefit, and edification, and comfort, of the children of God. They have, therefore, always highly prized them, and endeavored to enjoy them in the house of God. David says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Again he says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." The subjects of special grace are commonly very desirous at first, and

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always afterwards, of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They esteem a day in the courts of the Lord better than a thousand, where divine truths are exhibited, and divine ordinances are administered, for their spiritual benefit and growth of grace. For the sake of enjoying such means of grace to the best advantage, those who have become the subjects of special grace desire to join the church and enjoy the special privileges of it. Besides,

6. They are so sensible of the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and their proneness to forget and forsake God, that they desire to bind themselves, by covenant vows and obligations, to be steadfast and unmovable in his service. They find their hearts are like a deceitful bow, always bent to backsliding. Their first joyful views and hopes are often soon sunk in clouds and darkness, and their ardent love to God, soon succeeded by an undue love to the world, and their warm attachment to the friends of God, interrupted and abated by mixing with his apparently amiable enemies. They feel, therefore, the need of binding themselves to God and to his friends, to check and restrain them from going backward, instead of forward, in their religious course. These and various other reasons that might be mentioned, concur to lead them to enter into a solemn and perpetual covenant with God, never to be forgotten.

I shall conclude at present with one remark, which is plainly suggested by the subject. It is this: those who have sincerely made a public profession of religion, must rejoice to see any who appear to be the subjects of special grace, make a public profession of religion. There was great joy in Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day. There was great joy in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. And there was great joy in Samaria. And this great joy, in all these instances, was occasioned by those who made a public and credible profession of religion. It is very desirable that sinners should be turned from sin to holiness, and publicly declare they are the Lord's, and come and subscribe with their own hands a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. It is very desirable that all in this place, who have become the subjects of special grace, should spontaneously confess Christ before men, and add their names, their talents, their influence and exertions to this church. We have need of them, and they have need of us. The Spirit and the bride say come; let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come, and partake of the rich provisions of Christ's table. Here a question arises, which every professor ought to put to himself. Do I desire the growth, the increase and prosperity of this church? Do I desire that those who are not, might be the subjects of special grace? This is a trying question; and let no member of the church refuse to try himself by it.

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IMPROVEMENT.

1. If those who have become the subjects of special grace desire to make a public profession of religion, and to enter into covenant with God, then none who have really become subjects of special grace have any just excuse for neglecting to join the church, and neglecting to bind themselves to love and obey God for ever. There are, undoubtedly, not a few who have become the subjects of divine grace, that neglect to name the name of Christ, and to take the bond of the covenant upon them. I call this a neglect, because God has expressly required his friends to profess their love and obedience to him in a public manner, and to confirm their profession by a solemn, covenant transaction. And since the gospel day, Christ has expressly required his friends to confess him before men, and celebrate the memorials of his death. His command applies to, and binds, all who love him in sincerity. If any, therefore, who are become reconciled to him upon the terms of the gospel, do not profess him before the world, they neglect to perform a plain, positive and important duty, for which it is impossible that they should have any good excuse. But it is very evident that such persons often do endeavor to excuse themselves before God and their own consciences. I proceed, therefore, to examine their excuses.

Some say that they are in doubt, whether they ever have become the subjects of special grace. But I am speaking to doubting christians, who are essentially different from doubting sinners, who never were the subjects of special grace. Doubting christians have been the subjects of special grace; for the love of God has been shed abroad in their hearts. Such persons have no right to doubt, because they have the witness in themselves that they have been born of God. This evidence they ought to see, and renounce their doubts. Those who plead their doubts for the neglect of their duty, often acknowledge that, at times, they do see evidence of a change of heart. They do sensibly exercise love to God, faith in Christ, and obedience to his commands; and if such evidence and light should continue, without interruption, their hopes would overcome their doubts, and they should see their way clear to join the church. But have they any ground to expect, if they are christians, that their holy exercises ever will become uniform and uninterrupted? If not, why do they wait for that which they know they shall never find? While they justify themselves by this excuse, their own mouth condemns them. They have evidence, and acknowledge they have evidence, of saving grace, which is the evidence upon which they ought to act in making

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a public profession of religion. They therefore neglect a known duty, and are utterly inexcusable. But they say they are waiting for more grace, to give them more evidence; but can they expect more grace to give them more evidence, while they neglect their duty, and resist the evidence which God has graciously given them? The truth is, those who plead the want of evidence of grace, while they possess grace, assign a reason to themselves and others for their neglect, which is not the true cause of it. They are governed by some wrong, latent motive which they do not perceive, and for their blindness to it they are wholly to blame.

Some who are the subjects of special grace, plead in excuse for neglecting to join the church, that they are afraid the church would not receive them, if they should offer themselves to join. But let us examine what possible grounds they can reasonably have for such apprehensions. Are they afraid that they are not capable of relating their internal views and exercises so clearly and intelligibly, as that others may understand them, and exercise charity towards them? There is no ground for this apprehension. For those who have but little doctrinal knowledge, are capable of expressing the views and exercises they have had, in respect to God and their own hearts, and in respect to Christ, who suffered and died for them; and are quite as likely to give satisfactory evidence of a change of heart as others who have much greater speculative knowledge. Or are they afraid that the church will not judge candidly and impartially of the account they give of their hearts and conduct? This is an unreasonable fear, and looks like a groundless suspicion of the church. Though there may be undue prejudices in some individual or individuals, yet it is not to be supposed that the church, as a body, will be destitute of candor and impartiality. And the suspicion ought to be given up, as it ought never to have existed. Or does a fear of not being accepted, arise from a low and humiliating sense of their own unworthiness? If this be really the case they will not fail to discover it, and when discovered, it will be a recommendation, rather than an objection, in the minds of the church. The fear of not being received by the church, let it arise from what cause it may, is no excuse for any person's not making a public profession and joining the church.

Some who are the subjects of special grace, often plead in excuse for neglecting to make a public profession of religion, that they fear they should do more dishonor than honor to religion, if they should make a public profession and join the church. No christians ought to indulge such thoughts as these. As they have really embraced the gospel, they stand entitled to

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the Spirit of promise, and are actually subjects of sanctifying as well as regenerating grace. He that has begun a good work in them, will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ. Their fear arises from a species of unbelief, which is entirely inexcusable. If they sincerely desire to honor religion, they have no more reason to fear that they shall not honor it than other christians have. And if this were a good excuse in them, it would be as good an excuse for all others neglecting to make a public profession. Those who make this excuse may really fear that they may suffer reproach and opposition from the world, if they should profess religion, and this is the secret cause of their neglect. If they should discover this to be true, they must condemn themselves, and delay no longer. For no man can be a true disciple of Christ unless he is willing to take up his cross, and follow him.

Some who are the subjects of special grace, we hear plead in excuse for neglecting to profess religion and join the church, that they see others, who appear to be the subjects of special grace, and better qualified than they are to profess religion, live in the long neglect of this duty. This is a vain and groundless excuse; for they may be mistaken in respect to the qualifications of others; and if they are not, they have no right to follow their bad example. They are stumbling-blocks, and must answer for the great injury they do to themselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ. It is to be feared, however, that this is one of the most common and most consoling excuses that many make for neglecting to join the church. But can any subject of special grace really believe, that the neglect of others will excuse his neglect? The excuse is too grossly absurd ever to be made.

Some who are the subjects of special grace, endeavor to excuse themselves for neglecting to join the church where they are, because some of the members are irregular, and the church neglect to watch over them, or to reprove them, or to cast them out from their communion. A church may be in such a feeble, declining, luke-warm state. But this is no reason why those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and desire to promote his sinking cause, should neglect to name his name, and promote his cause; but rather a strong reason for their uniting with his few friends, to purify, strengthen and revive religion, and to rectify whatever is amiss in the church. The criminal neglect, imperfection, or insincerity of others, will not contaminate them, nor prevent their holding communion with Christ at his table. The excuse savors too much of spiritual pride, and looks like trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others. Neither this, nor any other excuse that can be made, will justify any who are subjects of special grace, for

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neglecting to make a public profession of religion and not joining the church. I have said so much upon this point, with a view to awaken the attention and convince the consciences of doubting and delaying christians, and not of doubting and delaying sinners; for they have no right to take God's covenant into their mouths. But it behooves the subjects of special grace, to join themselves to the Lord and to his people, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten.

2. If the subjects of special grace always desire to profess religion and partake of divine ordinances, then so long as they neglect their duty they must necessarily feel unhappy. They continually experience a painful conflict in their minds. Their holy and unholy desires are opposed to each other, and their hearts are at variance with their consciences. Their conscience imperiously calls upon them to do their duty, and condemns them for their criminal neglect; and what gracious exercises they have, keep conscience awake and alive to do its office. So that they live in a state of constant self condemnation. They experience an unhappiness, which they never experienced before they became the subjects of special grace. They feel an aversion to the world which they once loved, and cannot enjoy it. They feel an aversion to the friendship of the world, which they once loved, and cannot enjoy it. Though they find some pleasure in thinking of God, and in reading his word, yet that very pleasure condemns them for the neglect of a known duty. They lose an intimacy with those with whom they were once intimate, and are afraid of an intimacy with the professed friends of God, lest they and the world should see and reproach them for their criminal inconsistency of conduct, because they neglect other important duties, that they may appear less inconsistent to themselves and others. But still, they cannot get rid of their self inconsistency, and self condemnation, but live a painful and unhappy life. That this is true, I appeal to such as live in hope against hope, and in the habitual neglect of known duty.

3. While the subjects of special grace neglect to join the church, they live in a very sinful, as well as unhappy manner. They greatly injure both themselves and religion. They injure themselves, by depriving themselves of that peace and comfort which they might enjoy in communion with God and his people. They injure religion, by neglecting to perform those peculiar and important duties by which it is to be promoted in the world. They injure the friends of God, by practically joining with the world in neglecting and opposing the cause which they desire to promote, and have bound themselves to promote. They practically justify the impenitent in their impenitence and unbelief. They practically justify the penitent and believing,

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in neglecting to profess their faith and love, and to bind themselves to obedience. The more upright and amiable they appear, the more they injure the cause of God and the souls of men, by the weight and influence of their criminal example. There are no persons, perhaps, whose example the world more applaud, and are more fond of employing in excuse and justification of their own faulty negligence. It highly concerns these persons in particular, to prepare the way of the Lord, by giving up themselves to him and his people in a perpetual covenant. If they would come out from the world, and appear against them, they would carry conviction to their consciences, and awaken them to flee from the wrath to come. It has always been found that professing religion and entering into covenant with God, has had a greater effect than almost any other scene or circumstance, to awaken and alarm the careless and secure. And do the negligent subjects of special grace believe this to be true? And can they, with any inward peace and comfort, still continue to neglect a duty so important to themselves, to others, and to the cause of Christ?

4. It appears from what has been said, that some who have long entertained a hope of being the subjects of special grace, must soon give up their hope, if they continue to neglect joining the church. A well grounded hope of the grace of God, has, in all ages and in all places, led the subjects of such a hope to join themselves to the Lord and to his people. And if the hope of any does not produce this effect, have they not reason to fear that their hope is built on a false and sandy foundation, and ought to be given up? They have reason to fear that they have mistaken nature for grace, and that they are still in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. If this be the case of any, their duty is plain and important, to renounce their self righteousness and self dependence, and cast themselves upon the unpromised mercy of God, and sincerely to commit their spiritual and eternal concerns to his wise and sovereign disposal.

Finally, it appears from the whole tenor of this discourse, that it highly concerns those who have entered into covenant with God, to be steadfast in his covenant, and persevere in universal obedience. The bond by which they have freely and voluntarily bound themselves, is extremely solemn, and infinitely and perpetually binding. It is death to go back from following the Lord, and it is highly displeasing to him, to become weary in well doing. If you do not forsake him, he will never leave nor forsake you, but punctually fulfil the great and precious promises that he has made to you, and bound himself by an oath to fulfil. Trust in him, and he will keep you in perfect peace.

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PART XXII.

BAPTISM.

SERMON LXXVIII.

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SERMON LXXVIII.

THE MODE AND SUBJECTS OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. — Acts, xvi. 15.

The right of private judgment in matters of religion, is better secured to us than to any other people in the world. We have the privilege of forming and of propagating our own religious sentiments, without the least restriction. Every man, in this country, may think what he pleases, and speak what he thinks, concerning the duties and doctrines of religion. This great and distinguishing privilege, however, is extremely liable to abuse. It opens the door as wide to error as to truth, and affords an ample opportunity of diffusing, far and wide, the most absurd and pernicious doctrines. But every person of candor and discernment must clearly perceive, that it is much better to suffer the abuse of religious liberty than to suffer the loss of it. We ought, therefore, to give to others all the freedom which we wish to take to ourselves. If we take the liberty of differing from others, we ought to allow others the liberty of differing from us. Or, if we assume the right of separating from others, we ought to indulge others in assuming and enjoying the same right.

On this catholic and pacific principle, I have very rarely, in the course of twenty years, said any thing in public concerning the peculiar tenets of our Baptist brethren. They have assumed the right of separating from us; and we have no right to disturb them in the quiet enjoyment of their religious liberty. But, if they call our opinion and practice in question, we may, without giving the least ground of offence, take the liberty of defending

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and propagating both. This is the professed object of the ensuing discourse; in which I mean to speak, and wish to be heard, with the spirit of candor.

We and our brethren agree that water baptism is a divine institution; and we differ only in respect to the mode in which, and of the subjects to which, water is to be applied in the administration of this sacred ordinance. And the words which I have read, will naturally lead us to the consideration of both these points of difference. Paul and Silas, being called into Macedonia, resided a number of days in the principal city of that colony. And, in the account which they give us of their preaching and conduct there, they say, "On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made. And we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there." The circumstances here related, naturally lead us to conclude, that Lydia's family were not present, when she first heard and embraced the gospel; that after she became a believer, she returned to her house, where she professed her faith, to the satisfaction of the apostles; that her profession of faith was the sole ground upon which Paul baptized both her and her household; and that the ordinance of baptism, at this private house, was administered by affusion, or sprinkling. And according to this view of our text, it directly leads us to inquire,

I. How water is to be applied in baptism; and,

II. To whom baptism is to be administered.

I. Let us inquire how water is to be applied in baptism.

We agree with those with whom we are concerned in this discourse, that there is but one scriptural mode of baptizing. Christ appointed baptism as a standing ordinance, to be administered in all ages and in all parts of the world. He knew that baptism must be administered, either by sprinkling or by plunging. He knew that these two modes of applying water to the subjects of baptism, are extremely diverse from each other, both in their appearance and necessary circumstances. He could not view it, therefore, as a matter of mere indifference, in which of these modes this sacred and perpetual rite should be administered. Hence we must conclude that he actually appointed that particular mode of baptizing, which, all things considered, appeared the best suited to answer his own wise and gracious designs in the institution of the ordinance. But,

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whether he appointed sprinkling, or plunging, as the only proper mode of baptizing, is the single question which now lies before us. And, in order to determine this point, let us consider,

1. The true scriptural meaning of the word, baptize.

This word is derived from the Greek word, Βαπτίζω, which is variously understood by various authors.* Mr. Leigh says, in his 'Critica Sacra,' that "it *primarily* signifies such a kind of washing, rinsing, or cleansing, as is used in bucks, where linen is plunged and dipt. Yet it is taken more largely for any kind of washing, rinsing, or cleansing, even where there is no dipping at all." And he quotes Doctor Featly as saying, "Christ no where requireth dipping, but only baptizing: which word, (as Hesychius, Stephanus, Scapula, and Budæus, the great masters of the Greek tongue, make good, by very many instances and allegations out of classic writers) importeth no more than *ablution*, or *washing*." But here we ought to consider, that it is the use, rather than the derivation of words, which must determine their proper signification. It is very common, in all languages, for a word to lose its original or primary sense, and, by use, to take another and very different meaning. The word, Βαπτίζω, which is derived from Βαπτω, to dip, might, therefore, originally signify dipping, and yet, afterwards, by common use, signify washing or sprinkling; especially when applied to a religious ceremony. Supposing then it could be made to appear, by all Greek writers, except the inspired penmen, that Βαπτίζω primarily signified dipping, yet this would by no means prove that it does not properly signify sprinkling, when applied to the particular mode of administering a sacred rite.

And now, if we look into the Bible, we shall find that it not only may, but must, in a variety of cases, signify sprinkling or washing. It is said of all the Jews, in Mark, vii. 4. that "when they come from the market, except they wash (εαν μη βαπτισωνται, except they are baptized) they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing (βαπτισμους, baptisms) of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." In this passage, βαπτισωνται and βαπτισμους evidently signify washing or sprinkling. The Jews, it is well known, used to wash their hands by pouring water upon them: and this was the only proper, if not the only possible mode of washing their tables or seats, upon which they reclined at their meals. Christ also used the word baptism, in a sense very different from plunging. We are told that the same day in which he ascended up to heaven, he said to his disciples, "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not

* See Dr. Hemmenway on Infant Baptism.

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many days hence." This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when "there appeared unto the apostles cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This descent of the Spirit upon the apostles, much more resembled affusion than immersion; and, therefore, so far as we can gather any thing from it respecting the mode of baptism, it favors the idea of sprinkling.

2. Let us next inquire, whether the thing principally signified by baptism serves, in any measure, to determine the proper mode of its administration.

Our brethren suppose there is something in the signification of baptism which favors the mode of immersion, and often cite several figurative expressions in scripture to support their opinion. Let us look at this matter fairly. It must be allowed by all, that the thing principally signified by baptism, is the renovation of the heart by the special operation of the Spirit of God. This was the thing signified by circumcision. So says the apostle: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." In the same manner, baptism signifies the renovation of the heart by the special operation of the divine Spirit. Accordingly, we read of "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

But here the turning point is, whether either circumcision or baptism was designed to represent the *operation* of the Spirit, or the *fruit* of the Spirit. Circumcision certainly signified only the *fruit* of the Spirit; for there was nothing in the *mode* of circumcising, that resembled the mode of the Spirit's operation upon the human heart. And it is equally evident that baptism represents only the fruit of the Spirit, without any respect to the mode of the Spirit's operation. With this idea in our minds, let us read those two texts which our brethren so often urge, to prove the mode of baptism from the thing signified by it. The first is in Col. ii. 10—13. "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." The plain and obvious ideas, which lie upon the face of this text, are these: circumcision and baptism signify the

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same thing; the thing signified by both is the renovation of the heart, or the resurrection from spiritual death to spiritual life; and this renovation of the heart, or spiritual resurrection, is the fruit of the special operation of God. Hence, there is nothing in this passage of scripture to determine the mode of baptism, any more than the mode of circumcision. As it was not the mode of circumcision that made it signify the renovation of the heart, so it is not the mode of baptism, which makes it signify the same fruit of the Spirit. The other text we have alluded to, and which is parallel to this, is in Romans, vi. 3—6. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Believers are here said to be *buried with Christ by baptism*, because, being baptized into him, they were baptized into his death as well as into his burial. And from this representation, we may as well conclude that the mode of baptism resembles the form of Christ's person, and the manner of his crucifixion, as the mode of his burial. But the truth is, by believers being baptized into Christ, into his death, into his burial, and into his resurrection, nothing more nor less is here intended than their putting off the old man and putting on the new; or their being renewed in the spirit of their minds, and exhibiting, in their life and conversation, the same temper which Christ exhibited, both in his life and in his death. This great change in their hearts and lives was the fruit of the Spirit, and therefore properly signified by baptism, in whatever mode administered. It is the nature, and not the mode of baptism, which renders it a proper emblem of sanctification, which is the fruit of the Spirit. And this single consideration shows the absolute impropriety of pretending to determine the mode of baptism from its signification.

But after all, if it should be supposed, and even granted, that baptism is designed to signify, not the fruit of the Spirit but the mode of his operation, yet, even on this supposition, we must conclude that sprinkling is the scriptural mode of baptizing. For sprinkling much more resembles the mode of the Spirit's descent and influence upon the minds of men, than plunging. The Psalmist, speaking of the descent of the Spirit, says, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as

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showers that water the earth." God says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel." And again he says to the same people, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Paul says, Christ loved and gave himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." And again he says, that believers "are saved, not by works of righteousness," but "by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." If rain, and dew, and sprinkling, and washing, are here designed to represent the mode of the Spirit's descending and operating upon the minds of men; and if water ought to be applied in baptism, so as most clearly to represent this mode of the Spirit's descending and operating upon the human mind; then it is certain that baptism ought to be administered by affusion, or sprinkling, rather than plunging. And this will be farther confirmed, if we consider,

3. Several instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament. Though we are told that Lydia heard and embraced the gospel by the river side, yet we have no account that she and her household were baptized by immersion. It seems rather to be intimated that, after she believed, she returned from the river side to her own house; and that, for the convenience of the spectators, she and her family were baptized at her own door. For the apostles expressly say, "When she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there."

There is another instance of baptism, in this chapter, which is more circumstantially related: I mean that of the jailer and all his. At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God. Suddenly upon this there was an earthquake, which opened the prison doors, and set all the prisoners free. This alarmed the jailer, who sprang into the prison, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said unto him, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." The time of this whole transaction was extremely short. It was midnight before it began, and it was finished before day. For it is added, "And when it was day, the magis-

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trates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go." After the confusion occasioned by the earthquake, the apostles preached. After the apostles had preached, the jailer professed his faith. After he had professed his faith, he proposed to be baptized. And after he had proposed to be baptized, he took the apostles, and washed their stripes. Now, can we suppose that after all these things had been done, there was time for him to prepare himself and his family for a decent immersion, and for the apostles to baptize him and all his, in that mode, and then refresh themselves, before day? All the circumstances attending the baptism of these persons favor the supposition of their being sprinkled, rather than plunged.

There is no reason to suppose that Cornelius and those at his house were baptized by immersion. "Can any man," said Peter, "forbid water that these should not be baptized?" Here is no account of their making any preparation for immersion. Here is no account of their going out of the house to any river, or fountain of water, to be baptized. In short, here is not a single circumstance related, which favors the idea of immersion. But, on the contrary, Peter's mode of expression seems to suggest that water was brought to sprinkle them. "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?"

The last instance of baptism which I shall now mention, is that of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. They were all baptized the same day in which they were converted. It was nine o'clock in the forenoon when Peter began his lengthy discourse. It cannot be supposed that he should finish his sermon, and the converts should go through the profession of their faith, until past the middle of the day. And then there remained only five or six hours, in which to baptize three thousand persons. Could all these be baptized, by immersion, in this short period? Could five hundred be decently plunged in an hour? which is more than eight in a minute. But it may be said that all the apostles were employed at the same time in the same service, at different places. This is hardly supposable; for instead of finding twelve proper places for immersion, it will be difficult to find one. Where then were these multitudes immersed? Our brethren suggest, it was at the temple. But this they can only suggest, for there is not the least proof, nor even probability of it. If there had been conveniences for immersion at the temple, it is very unlikely the rulers of the temple would have granted christians the liberty of profaning it, by performing what they deemed an unhallowed rite. Besides, the circumstances of the converts were altogether unfavorable to immersion. They had come from distant parts of the world to celebrate a Jewish festival, without the least knowl-

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edge of Christ, or of Christian ordinances. There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that they either brought with them proper garments for immersion, or that they could possibly borrow them of strangers and enemies. In a word, after considering the number of these converts, and all the circumstances of their baptism, I am constrained to believe that the apostles, for once, baptized by sprinkling. And if they once baptized in this mode, our brethren will allow us to believe that they always did; for they hold the proper mode of baptism to be essential to the ordinance. But they deny that the apostles ever did baptize by sprinkling, and therefore we will candidly attend to those instances of baptism which they allege, to refute our opinion and to establish their own.

They allege that John always baptized by immersion. But, if we examine the several instances of his baptizing, distinctly, perhaps it will appear otherwise. The first instance is related in these words: "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan." It is supposed that John baptized by immersion, because it is here said that he baptized in Jordan. To this it is easy to reply, the Greek preposition εν might have been properly rendered at. And if we read the text with this variation, that John baptized at Jordan, no idea of the mode of his baptizing will be suggested.

We next read of his baptizing Christ. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him." "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water." If we here read, as the original allows us to read, that he "went up straightway *from* the water," it will take away all appearance of immersion.

The last account of John's baptizing is supposed to be still more plain and forcible in favor of plunging. For it is said, "John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there: And they came, and were baptized." Enon lay a little this side of Jordan; John baptized both at Jordan and Enon, because he preached there; and he preached there, because it was foretold that he should be "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." This was doubtless the principal cause of his baptizing in Enon. But another reason was, because there was much water there. And this might be a good reason for his baptizing there, though he baptized by affusion, or sprinkling. For the multitudes who attended his preaching would, in that part of the country, require much water for themselves, and for the beasts upon which they rode. And the original coincides with this supposition. For the Greek words rendered much water, might have been more prop-

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erly and literally translated many waters, or little rivulets. And these, travellers tell us, are the largest streams now to be found in Enon. The two reasons which we have now suggested, are abundantly sufficient to account for John's baptizing in Enon, without supposing that he baptized there for the sake of baptizing by immersion.

It only remains to examine the account of Philip's baptizing the eunuch. It is said, indeed, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." As the water, no doubt, lay in a valley, so Philip and the eunuch went down to get to it, and went up to get from it. But there is nothing in the text, as it stands in the original, to determine whether either of them went under water. And since we cannot suppose that Philip did, we must suppose that the eunuch did not; for the expressions concerning both are precisely the same. They were both on a journey; they were both unprovided with proper clothes for going into deep water; there is a total silence concerning their making the least preparation for a decent immersion; and, therefore, laying all the circumstances together, the most fair and natural supposition is, that they both went into the edge of the water, just as they both were when they quitted the chariot, and that Philip baptized the eunuch by affusion or sprinkling.

On the whole, there is nothing in the New Testament, to determine that either John, or Christ, or the apostles, ever baptized any person by immersion. We find no instances of baptism which appear to be inconsistent with sprinkling; but we find many which appear to be inconsistent with plunging. We find no person waiting for a more convenient time and place for immersion; but we find many persons who were baptized at the very time and place in which they became believers, without the least preparation of proper apparel for going into the water. We all know that time, and place, and apparel, are very essential circumstances of plunging, but not of sprinkling. A person may be baptized by sprinkling, at any place, whether at home or abroad; in any situation, whether in sickness or health; in any apparel, whether usual or unusual; in any season, whether cold or hot, whether wet or dry; and in any hour of the twenty-four, whether morning, noon, or night. Sprinkling is a mode of baptizing which is adapted to all times, to all seasons of the year, to all parts of the world, and to all circumstances of human life. The institutions under the law were calculated for a particular people, in a particular climate; but the institutions of the gospel are designed for all nations, in all places. And, in many places, plunging would be a greater

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yoke of bondage to christians, than the bloody rite of circumcision was to the Jews. Hence, we have no reason to think that our compassionate Saviour would institute a standing ordinance, to be observed all over the world, which could not be administered, in certain seasons, to certain persons, without extreme difficulty and danger.

But, though we have supposed that there is but one scriptural mode of baptizing, and though we have endeavored to show that affusion, or sprinkling, is the only scriptural mode, yet we would, by no means, deny the validity of immersion. The mode of administering a divine ordinance, is not essential to the validity of it. This all must allow, in certain cases. A marriage is valid, whether solemnized in the mode of the Episcopalians, or the Congregationalists, or the Friends. So a baptism is valid, though administered either by immersion or affusion. It is the duty of christians, however, not only to observe the institutions of Christ, but to observe them in the very mode which he hath enjoined. He has undoubtedly revealed his will, with sufficient plainness, concerning the mode of baptism; and it concerns every person to submit to his will, both in opinion and practice. And, perhaps, what we have now said, may serve to assist some in discovering his will in this particular point, which is by no means essential in its nature, but yet very important in its consequences.

I now proceed to inquire,

II. To whom baptism is to be administered.

Our brethren agree with us in maintaining what they are pleased to call, believer's baptism. But they differ from us in denying the duty and propriety of administering this ordinance to the infant seed of believers. Here the point of difference between us is serious and important. Let us, therefore, attend to it with proper seriousness and candor.

But before we proceed to offer any arguments to determine on which side of this question the truth lies, it may be proper to premise in general, that there is nothing in scripture directly against infant baptism. Those who deny it, profess to deny it upon negative evidence. They never pretend to say that believers are forbidden to baptize their infant seed. But if there be no direct evidence against infant baptism, and some positive evidence in favor of it, then every impartial person must at least lean towards the doctrine, though he may meet with some seeming difficulties.

It is no direct evidence against the duty of baptizing infants, that Christ required the apostles to baptize professed believers. It is true, he required the apostles to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," adding, "He that believeth

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and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." But his omitting to mention infants in this commission, is no more a direct evidence that he meant to exclude them from the ordinance of baptism, than that he meant to exclude them from the enjoyment of heaven. For it is as expressly said that those who do not believe shall be damned, as that those who do believe and are baptized shall be saved. But who will suppose that he meant to include infants among those who did not believe, and should not be saved? The truth is, Christ had before intimated that infants might be saved; and in this commission he directs the apostles to preach to those who were capable of understanding the gospel, and to baptize those who professed to believe it. Hence, there is no propriety in urging believers' baptism, as a direct argument against infant baptism.

Again, it is no direct evidence against the duty of baptizing infants, that they are incapable of understanding the nature and design of the ordinance. There is no duty lies upon infants to be baptized. If there be any duty in the case, it lies upon their parents. And their parents are capable of understanding the nature and design of baptism; and by giving up their infant seed to God, according to his own appointment, may not only do their own duty, but essentially promote the spiritual and eternal good of their dear and precious offspring.

Again, it is no direct evidence against the duty of baptizing infants, that their parents are unable to discover what good purpose can be answered by their baptism. In this respect, infant baptism is exactly similar to infant circumcision. A Jewish parent was as ignorant of the particular benefit of infant circumcision, as a Christian parent now is of the particular benefit of infant baptism. But our ignorance of the reasons or benefits of divine institutions, does by no means dissolve our obligation to observe them. It is always our duty to obey the known will of God, though we are unable to discern the ground of his requisitions, or the benefit of our obedience.

Once more, the want of an express precept for infant baptism is no direct argument against it. It may be a duty for believers to baptize their infant seed, though it is not commanded in so many words. We have no express command for keeping the first day of the week as the Sabbath. We have no express command for family prayer. And we have no express precept, nor example, for admitting females to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. But our brethren make a practice of praying in their families, of keeping the first day of the week as holy time, and of admitting females to the Lord's table. Hereby they practically acknowledge the obligation of perform-

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ing these positive duties, though not enjoined by any positive precept. Why then may not we be as consistent, in believing and practicing infant baptism, though not required to do it by any positive precept, as they and we are, in believing and practicing other positive duties, without any positive command? Our brethren, therefore, have no right, from the nature of the case, nor from their own practice, to consider the want of express precept as a bar to our inquiry concerning the propriety of baptizing infants. Hence, the way lies fairly open to consider what may be found in favor of baptizing the infant seed of believers; and if there be any arguments in favor of this practice, they ought to have their full weight. Let us, then, without any bias from education on the one hand, and without any party prejudice on the other, impartially attend to what may be offered in support of the almost universal, and the absolutely immemorial practice of the Christian church.

Here I would observe,

1. That baptism comes in the place of circumcision; from which it is very natural to conclude that it ought to be applied, as that was, to the infant seed of believers. Circumcision was an appendage of the covenant of grace; that is to say, circumcision was a duty enjoined upon believers only. We are told that circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith to Abraham, or a duty enjoined upon him as a real saint. But when Christ came into the world, he took away this appendage of the covenant of grace, and instituted baptism in the room of it. He might indeed have abolished circumcision without instituting baptism, or any other ordinance, to supply its place. And supposing he had done this, no person in the world, perhaps, would have thought of baptizing either infants or adults. For the abolishing of one ordinance can never be considered as the instituting of another. We do not pretend, therefore, to derive the institution of baptism from the institution of circumcision; nor to plead that believers now ought to baptize their infant seed, because they were once required to circumcise them. All we mean to say here is, that since circumcision has been abolished, and baptism has been instituted in its room, therefore it is reasonable to suppose that baptism may be applied to the same subjects to which circumcision was applied. We do not pretend to assert that this must be the case. For when Christ abolished circumcision, he might have instituted the baptism of adults only, and not the baptism of infants. But if he had actually done this, it is reasonable to suppose that he would have expressly excluded infants from the ordinance, or virtually excluded them from it, by expressly confining it to those of adult years. There is the more reason to

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think that Christ would have been more explicit in excluding infants from baptism, if he had meant to exclude them, because believers had been so long used to the devoting of their infant seed to God, by a sacred rite, and were so extremely fond of the practice.

But, to return from this digression, if it be one: we have said that baptism comes in the place of circumcision. The truth of this assertion appears from two considerations. One is, that baptism signifies the same thing that circumcision signified. Circumcision signified the renovation of the heart, and baptism signifies the washing of regeneration. This resemblance between baptism and circumcision plainly intimates that baptism supplies the place of circumcision. Besides, baptism is the appointed pre-requisite of admission into the visible church, under the gospel, just as circumcision was the appointed pre-requisite of admission into the visible church, under the law. The visible church has always been the same; that is, composed of visible saints. The members of the Jewish church were professors of godliness, as much as the members of the Christian church. The visible church of God has been, in all ages, a society of visible believers. Under the law, none could be admitted into the visible church without being circumcised; and under the gospel, none can be admitted into the visible church without being baptized. In this important respect, baptism certainly serves the same purpose that circumcision did; and therefore in this important respect, it certainly comes in the place of circumcision.

Now this analogy between circumcision and baptism affords a plain presumptive argument in favor of baptizing the infant seed of believers. We know to whom circumcision was to be applied. Believing parents were to circumcise their children and all under their care. Thus Abraham, according to the divine command, first circumcised himself, then Ishmael his son, and then all that were born in his house, or bought with his money. And his posterity, in the line of Isaac, continued to circumcise their male infants and male proselytes, until the coming of Christ, who abolished that institution, and appointed baptism to supply its place. But if baptism comes in the place of circumcision to adults, why not to infants? We can think of no reason from the nature of the case, and we can find none given in the New Testament, why baptism should not be administered to infants as well as to adults. Supposing Christ had said to the apostles, "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them, instead of circumcising them;" would they not have naturally concluded, from the well known extent of circumcision, that they were to baptize, not only believers, but also their infant

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seed? And would they not have given us the very same accounts of their practice, which we now find recorded in the New Testament, that they baptized such an one, and his household; and such an one, and all his? Does not analogy lead us to reason in this manner, in another instance of instituted duty? Do we not suppose that the first day of the week now comes in the place of the seventh? And do we not conclude, from this single circumstance, that the first day of the week is of the same duration as the seventh, and to be employed in the same kind of public and private devotion? Any argument drawn from analogy has weight, in proportion to the degree of analogy from which it is drawn. In this case, the degree of analogy between baptism and circumcision is very great; and therefore there is great reason to conclude that baptism, which takes the place of circumcision, is to be administered, as that was, not only to believers, but also to their infant seed. This leads me to observe,

2. That it appears from several instances of the apostles' conduct, that they baptized some, on account of the faith of others. It has been just observed that their commission to baptize the converts to Christianity, would naturally lead them to administer baptism to the same subjects to which circumcision had formerly been applied, unless they were directed to the contrary. And the accounts of their baptizing exactly correspond with this supposition. For they baptized not only believers, but their families on their account, as we do at this day. It is true, we read of their baptizing many individuals on their own account; but in such instances there is no intimation of their having families; or if they had, there is no intimation of their families being present, when they were baptized. We find not a single instance of their baptizing the head of a family, and yet neglecting to baptize the children, or servants, because they were not believers. But whenever we read of their baptizing a master or mistress, we also read of their baptizing all under his or her care. Let us consider two remarkable instances of this kind, which are related in this chapter. The first instance is the baptism of Lydia and her household. The account which the apostles themselves give of it, is this: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there." According to this representation, it appears that Lydia's household were baptized wholly on her account. It is said that she

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both heard and believed the gospel; but it is not said that they either heard or believed it. Nay, it is very plainly suggested in the thirteenth verse, that they were not present when Paul preached. "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made, and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither." None but women, it seems, heard Paul preach, and none but Lydia's heart was opened to receive the truth in love. And from this we may fairly conclude that her household neither heard nor embraced the gospel; and, of consequence, that they were baptized not on their own, but solely on her account.

The baptism of the jailer and of his family is very circumstantially related in our context. When he had brought the apostles out of prison, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them, the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." The apostles here speak the language of the former dispensation, in promising salvation to the jailer and his house, on the condition of his believing. And Christ addressed Zaccheus in the same style. "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham." Such expressions as these plainly suggest that the faith of parents is of some peculiar spiritual advantage to their children and households. The apostles' language to the jailer, therefore, perfectly accords with their conduct towards him, in baptizing his family on his account. There is not a single circumstance related, which indicates that his family were believers. Though the apostles preached to all in his house, that is, to all the spectators collected on that extraordinary occasion; yet he is distinguished from all the rest, as the only person awakened, convinced and converted. I know it is said, in our translation, that "he rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." But according to the original it is, "he rejoiced in every part of the house, believing in God." This represents him as feeling and acting with great propriety, after he had devoted himself and his family to the service of his Maker, agreeably to the divine institution. The most critical and candid examination of this whole transaction, can discover no evidence that any person believed but the jailer; and, therefore, we must conclude that his family were baptized entirely on his account.

It may now be proper to make a few plain and obvious

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remarks upon these two instances of household baptism, which we have just been considering. And here,

First, If these families actually believed, and were baptized on their own account, then there was as much reason, at least, for relating their faith, as relating the faith of Lydia and of the jailer. Nay,

Secondly, There was a great deal more reason for relating the faith of these families, than the faith of the heads of them. For if each of these families were converted at once, it was a remarkable display of divine grace. No other instances of the same kind can be found in the Bible. We there find many instances of pious parents having very wicked and rebellious children; but we find not a single instance of a pious parent's having his whole family converted at once. Such instances of the conversion of households are contrary to God's usual dispensations of grace. It has always been his common method to take one and to leave another; to take one of a family, and two of a city, and lead them to Zion. If the whole, in each of these families, therefore, had been converted at once, their conversion would have been worthy of transmission to all future ages. Their faith would have been far more remarkable than their baptism. But the inspired historian has related their baptism, without the least intimation of their faith; which is a strong presumptive evidence that they were not believers. This leads me to add,

Thirdly, That their baptism is related in just such a manner as we might have expected, had they not been believers. If only Lydia believed, and her household were baptized on her account, then it was proper to mention her faith, and say nothing more about her household than barely that they were baptized. And if only the jailer believed, then it was proper to mention his faith, and simply mention the baptism of his family. This is just such an account as we might have expected in the case of infant baptism. Should a missionary among the natives of this country give us an account of his baptizing believers and their children, he would naturally say that he baptized such a man and his household, and such an one and all his. He would not think it necessary to call the children or servants by name, nor to say any thing about their believing, or not believing. But were he to give an account of the baptism of a whole family, who were all converted at once, he would think it very proper to mention their conversion before their baptism; or at least, he would think it very improper to mention their baptism, and wholly omit the account of their conversion, which was far more remarkable and interesting. If the inspired writer had told us that Lydia and all her house-

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hold were converted, we might have justly inferred from it, that they were all baptized. Or, if he had told us that the jailer and all his were believers, we might have justly concluded that they were all admitted to baptism. But we have no right, on the contrary, to infer that these families were all believers, merely because the inspired writer has told us that they were all baptized. Indeed, there is not the least positive evidence in favor of the faith of these families, but the highest probability or moral certainty that they were not believers. And if they were not believers, then it is certain that they were not baptized on their own account, but on account of their parents, or of those who had the care of their education. Whether there were any infants in these families is a question foreign from our present argument, which wholly turns upon the representation of some being baptized on the account of others. If the jailer's and Lydia's households were servants, and baptized on their master's and mistress's account, this is a sufficient evidence that the apostles baptized the infants of believing parents. If these two instances of household baptism be fully and fairly considered, they must appear to be as plain examples of infant baptism, as it is reasonable to suppose the apostles would have left us, in case they had made it their universal practice to baptize the infant seed of believers. To strengthen this argument, and to confirm the main point which we are laboring to establish, I would observe,

3. That if the apostles had not baptized the children of believing parents, the Jews would have bitterly complained of their conduct. The Jews severely complained of the apostles, for preaching against the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation. They stoned Stephen for maintaining that the law of Moses was not perpetual, but designed to give way to the superior dispensation of the gospel. They often complained of the gospel, as being inconsistent with, and subversive of, the genius and spirit of their written law. "We know," say they, "that God spake unto Moses." But they could not bear the gospel, which they thought was contrary to Moses' writings. Accordingly, the apostle Paul wrote his epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians and Hebrews, to remove the objections which the Jews raised against the gospel, as contradicting and abrogating the Mosaic economy. But we never hear the Jews complaining that their children were injured by being cut off from an ancient privilege, without receiving in its room any equivalent advantage. This is altogether unaccountable, if the apostles refused to baptize their children, instead of circumcising them. For they held circumcision in the highest estimation, and even founded their hopes of heaven upon it. They

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signified to our Saviour, that they expected to be saved by virtue of being the seed of Abraham, and the subjects of circumcision. They could no more bear to give up the circumcision of their children, than they could bear to give up their salvation, without some substitute in the room of that precious, and in their view, saving ordinance. If the apostles, therefore, had refused to admit their children, not only to circumcision, but to baptism, they would have loudly complained of their conduct. They would have viewed them as shutting their infants out of the kingdom of heaven. Why then did they not complain? The only probable reason is, that the apostles actually baptized their infants, instead of circumcising them. This, and nothing short of this, could have reconciled them to the gospel, in superseding their long and darling privilege of circumcision. We must, therefore, in this case, either disbelieve the voice of nature, or believe that the apostles maintained and practiced infant baptism. And now, to finish this train of reasoning, I would observe once more,

4. That infant baptism has been the uninterrupted practice of the Christian church, from the time of the apostles to the present day. There is no one fact better established by ecclesiastical history, than the original and uninterrupted practice of infant baptism in the Christian world. Dr. Mosheim, who gives us a very particular account of the religious rites and ceremonies and doctrines and disputes and divisions in the Christian church, never mentions any period of time, from the apostles' days down to the present century, when christians in general, either disbelieved the doctrine, or discontinued the practice of infant baptism. Though the primitive churches were very early corrupted by errors, and torn by disputes and divisions, yet they all agreed in respect to the duty and practice of baptizing the children of believing parents. And they were so far from disputing about the doctrine of infant baptism, that they made use of this doctrine to establish another, of very great importance in the Christian scheme. Origen, who lived within a little more than a hundred years after the apostles, not only asserted infant baptism to have been the constant usage of christians, but made use of it, to prove the moral depravity of infants. Austin, near two hundred years afterwards, brought the practice of baptizing infants, to prove the doctrine of original sin; and though Pelagius, his antagonist, felt himself pinched with the argument, yet he durst not deny the duty and practice of infant baptism. Besides, there was a council called, about the middle of the third century, at Carthage in Africa, consisting of above fifty bishops, for the purpose of determining whether infants might be baptized before they were eight

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days old, according to the law of circumcision. And the council unanimously agreed that the baptism of infants was not confined, like their former circumcision, to any particular day. Such clear and strong evidence there is, that infant baptism has been the uninterrupted practice of christians in general, from the days of the apostles to the present day.

Now the question is, How was it possible for the Christian church to establish this practice, unless they, at first, derived it from the preaching and example of the apostles? If the apostles baptized the infant seed of believers, then all the churches which they planted, were originally established in the belief and practice of infant baptism. And this belief and practice they would naturally transmit to all the churches descending from, and connected with them, from age to age, to the end of time. In this way, it is easy to account for the uninterrupted practice of infant baptism in the Christian church, from the beginning to this day. But if, on the other hand, the apostles themselves did not baptize the children of believing parents, nor teach their followers to do it, then all the churches which they planted, were what we should now call, Baptist churches. These primitive churches were very numerous, and scattered over a great part of the world. The apostles went among various nations, and into very distant parts of the earth, and planted churches in all the countries, and in most of the cities, where they carried the gospel. The church at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Colosse, and Thessalonica, as well as the seven churches of Asia, were become famous before the death of several of the apostles. This appears from the epistles which the apostles wrote to them, and the account which they give of their numbers, their supernatural gifts, and their doctrinal knowledge. And inasmuch as they were surrounded by many malignant and cunning enemies, it greatly concerned them to be well acquainted with the doctrines and duties of Christianity, that they might be better able to convince gainsayers, and defend their Christian principles and practices against the objections of subtile infidels. They were themselves so sensible of this, that, in some instances, they applied to the apostles for information; and the apostles were so sensible of this, that, in other cases, they gave them information, without their application or request.

The two special ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, served more than any speculative doctrines, to distinguish christians from the rest of the world, and to expose them to the reproach and opposition of their enemies. And this would naturally excite the apostles to be very careful, in giving them just and clear ideas of these two peculiar institutions. Accordingly, the apostle Paul took particular pains to rectify the mistaken

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views, and disorderly conduct, of the Corinthians, in attending the Lord's supper. And if this, or any other church, had been ignorant or erroneous respecting the mode or subjects of Christian baptism, we may well suppose, that he, or some other of the apostles, would have taken proper measures to remove their ignorance, or rectify their mistakes. But we find no church either asking, or receiving any instructions concerning the mode or subjects of baptism. It is, therefore, to be presumed, that the apostles, at their death, left all the churches, which they had planted, well instructed and well united, in respect to this divine institution. They were all no doubt built on the foundation of the apostles' doctrine and practice. If the apostles were Baptists, they were Baptists. If the apostles never baptized infants, none of the churches, in their day, baptized infants.

The great and interesting question now returns, with peculiar force, When did the practice of infant baptism begin? This no Anabaptist has ever presumed to determine. Dr. Gill allows that infant baptism was the general practice of the Christian church, from the third to the eleventh century. There remains, therefore, only three hundred years for the introduction and universal spread of infant baptism. In which of these three centuries, then, did the practice begin? Was the practice introduced in the first century? No man can tell. Was the practice introduced in the second century? No man can tell. Was the practice introduced in the third century? No man can tell. But our brethren can tell that the practice was become general in the close of the third century.

Now can we suppose that the practice of infant baptism did begin in the third century? By no means. For this would be to suppose that all the churches which had been planted, in the course of two hundred years, did, in the course of less than one hundred years, become universally corrupt, in respect to one of the special ordinances of the gospel. This is much too short a period for the introduction and universal spread of such a great innovation and error in the Christian church.

Again: Can we suppose that the practice of infant baptism began in the second century? This cannot be reasonably supposed. For this supposition carries the innovation and corruption still nearer to the times, the example and the influence of the apostles. If no infant had ever been baptized in the beginning of the second century, then the practice of the apostles, the universal practice of the churches, and the total silence of the New Testament, were all against introducing infant baptism. And how could these great obstacles be surmounted? The first proposers of the innovation and heresy had no arguments from the reason of things, nor from the nature and necessity of the

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case, to enforce their unscriptural, unapostolical, unecclesiastical opinions. With what motives, or arguments, then, could they prevail over the universal tradition, and universal prejudice against infant baptism? The churches all knew their present practice, and the more intelligent and well informed among them knew, either by history or tradition, the practice of the apostles; how then could such persons be led into error and delusion, in so plain a case? It required no superior learning, nor acute discernment, to determine whether infants were proper subjects of baptism. The only questions were, What saith the scripture? What said the apostles? What said their practice? And what says the present practice of all the Christian world? These, according to the opinion of our brethren, all said, with one voice, Infants are not to be baptized. In such a case, what could it avail for one man, or for a few individuals, to say that infants ought to be baptized as well as adults? It is true indeed, the bare opinion, or the plausible arguments of one great and respectable man, may possibly lead a thousand persons into error, upon some nice and difficult point; but the opinion and arguments of the greatest and best of men could have had no great weight upon a subject which rested solely on the practice of the church, and the example of the apostles. There were, therefore, insurmountable difficulties in the way of introducing infant baptism in the second century.

It only remains to inquire, whether it could have been introduced in the first. Here it is easy to see that the difficulties increase, as we approach nearer and nearer to the luminous times of the apostles. In the first century, especially in the beginning, the middle, or even in the latter part of it, there were living witnesses of the practice of the apostles, who could have testified, from their own personal knowledge, that the apostles did not baptize infants. And all the most sincere, devout and conscientious christians, in this enlightened century, would have been extremely attached to the authority and example of the apostles, and would have loudly objected against introducing any novelty, contrary to their sacred opinion and practice. It is hardly possible, therefore, to conceive that infant baptism should have been introduced, in any part of the first century, if any individuals, however great and learned, had been bold and corrupt enough to attempt it.

And now it is time to observe that, as there is no evidence to prove that infant baptism was actually introduced, in either the first, second, or third century, so there is no evidence to prove that it was even so much as attempted. This is remarkable indeed. Though we might suppose it was possible to have introduced infant baptism into all the churches, in the

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course of the first three centuries, yet we cannot suppose it was possible to have introduced it without raising any controversy, or dispute about it, among christians. If it was an innovation and error, it must have been introduced gradually, and by means of preaching, conversing and disputing. All innovations, errors and heresies, are always introduced by some of these methods. No body or bodies of men ever changed either their political or religious sentiments all at once, without warm and lengthy disputes. This, however, we know was the case, with respect to the introduction of the errors and heresies, which corrupted and disturbed the churches, in the early ages of Christianity. The errors introduced by Sabellius, Arius and Pelagius, excited great commotions, as well as long and warm disputes, in the churches of Christ. And if infant baptism had been an innovation, and a corruption of one of the peculiar ordinances of the gospel, it could not have been introduced, in those early times, among christians, without raising similar disputes, commotions and divisions. But, strange to say, the pen of history has not transmitted to us the least intimation of any public dispute about the doctrine of infant baptism; though it has recorded a dispute of far less consequence, respecting the proper time of baptizing infants. Dr. Mosheim has not only mentioned the principal errors and heresies which prevailed in the first, second and third centuries, but even given us the names of the most noted heretics, and of their most noted antagonists. He has related the times when, and the places where, those errors and heresies took their rise; and, in several instances, marked the times and means of their decline and extinction. In particular, he tells us when, and where, and by whom, the disputes about the Trinity, about the law of Moses, about the personal reign of Christ on earth, about the baptism of heretics, and about universal salvation, were carried on, in the first four centuries; the very period when, our brethren say, infant baptism must have been introduced, if it were not of divine original. But yet this same judicious and faithful historian, never tells us when, nor where, nor by whom, infant baptism was introduced into the church of Christ, after the days of his apostles; nor says a single word about the cause or consequences of such a great and interesting innovation. Interesting, I say, because, if infant baptism had been an innovation, it would have had a greater tendency to disturb the peace and unity of the churches, than any other innovation which took place in the primitive days of Christianity. Disputes about doctrines, or points of speculation, may rise high and continue long, without throwing churches into tumults and divisions; but these unhappy consequences naturally flow from

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disputes about practical subjects. This may be clearly illustrated by a dispute very near akin to infant baptism; I mean the dispute about the rebaptizing of heretics. This dispute arose in the third century, in the church of Rome, by the means of Novatian, a presbyter of uncommon learning, eloquence, and apparent sanctity; it occasioned the calling of an ecclesiastical council; and it finally produced a separation in the Christian church, which continued two hundred years. Now, if infant baptism had been an innovation, introduced by some such aspiring heretic, would it not have raised as warm and long disputes as this practical error of rebaptizing heretics, and produced as great confusions and divisions in the church of Christ? And if such discords and contentions had arisen, can we suppose they would not have made as conspicuous a figure on the page of history, as the animosity and bustle about a far more trifling error? But what history informs us of a single controversy, commotion, or separation in the Christian church, in the first and purest ages of it, with respect to the rise, progress, or effects, of infant baptism? Or what history tells us when, or where, or by whom, infant baptism was palmed upon the Christian world? The silence of all history upon these points, amounts to a moral certainty that infant baptism was not introduced into the church of Christ, in any period of the first three centuries after the apostles; and, of consequence, that it was derived from the opinion and practice of the apostles themselves.

If we derive the origin of infant baptism from this pure source, all sacred and profane history, respecting this subject, will appear plain and consistent, from Abraham to Christ, and from Christ to this day. Abraham, the father of the faithful, circumcised infants; his descendants continued in the practice to the gospel day; then they made no complaint that their children were injured by the introduction of baptism; the apostles baptized believers and their households; and the practice of household baptism has continued, through all the ages and changes of the Christian church, from the apostles' days to the present time. These are plain and consistent facts, which carry the most unexceptionable evidence in favor of infant baptism. A standing ordinance is calculated to carry its own evidence with it, as long as it exists. If the apostles were enjoined by Christ to baptize infants, their practice in baptizing them, was calculated to perpetuate the practice, from time to time, and from age to age, to the end of the world. This uninterrupted practice of infant baptism, therefore, carries its own evidence of its divine original.

It is extremely difficult for me to conceive, how any person

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can bring himself to believe that all the churches planted by the apostles were originally Baptist churches, and continued so, during the lives of the apostles; and yet within one, or two, or three hundred years, all departed from the faith and practice of the apostles, without causing any disputes, or divisions; or even leaving a single trait of such a great, practical and important innovation in the Christian world.

Thus I have endeavored to exhibit the strongest arguments, in my mind, in favor of infant baptism. I have purposely passed over several considerations which have been urged in support of this doctrine, because there appears to be no occasion for calling in the aid of doubtful texts, and fine spun reasonings upon this subject. The whole current of scripture, and the whole current of history must, in time to come, as in time past, carry general conviction to the Christian world, of the duty and importance of infant baptism.

It may be proper now to close this discourse, with a few practical reflections.

1. Every person who wishes to know the truth respecting the subject which we have been considering, ought to examine it with a good degree of candor. This amiable disposition will exclude prejudice, prepossession, and every affection which tends to blind the understanding and warp the judgment. In reasoning upon mathematical, philosophical and metaphysical subjects, we have no occasion for candor; but in reasoning upon moral subjects, we have great occasion for candor, in order to compare circumstances, and weigh arguments, with impartiality. Christ has given us his own express testimony that he instituted baptism as a standing ordinance in his church; but he has not given us the same plain and simple evidence respecting the proper mode and the proper subjects of this religious ceremony. Here we are left to form our opinion and regulate our practice, by such evidence as may be fairly collected from the combined force of moral arguments. We find no express precept in favor of sprinkling, nor any express prohibition against it. We find no express precept for baptizing infants, nor any express prohibition against it. We find no express declaration, that the apostles baptized infants, nor any express declaration that they did not. On the other hand, we find many circumstances in favor of sprinkling; but none in favor of plunging. We find many things which naturally imply that infants were to be baptized, and that the apostles actually baptized them; but none that imply the contrary. And besides all this, we find the analogy of divine dispensations and the current of history wholly on the side of infant baptism. Here is ample room for the exercise of candor; nor

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is it possible to compare these circumstances, and balance these arguments with impartiality, without it. Candor, in this case, will teach every person to be satisfied with that kind of evidence which the nature of this subject affords, and with that degree of evidence which results from the united influence of these moral arguments. It is impossible to give a mathematical or metaphysical demonstration that our forefathers, who first subdued the natives of New England, were Europeans; but yet it is easy to give the highest moral evidence of it, and such as no candid mind can possibly resist. So it is impossible to give a strict demonstration that infants are proper subjects of baptism, or that sprinkling is the proper mode of administering it; but yet it appears from this discourse, and from larger and better discourses upon this subject,* that it is easy to give such moral evidence in favor of both these points, as is sufficient to convince a candid and impartial mind. Those who lived in the fourth century, when, our brethren grant, the practice of infant baptism generally prevailed, had no more warrant for it, either from scripture precept, or scripture example, than we now have. But yet this practice has generally prevailed in the Christian church, from their day to ours. How is this consistent with what our brethren so often plead, that the bare want of scripture precept and example for infant baptism, is a clear and sufficient evidence against it? What is the conclusion of candor in this case? Shall we suppose the greatest and best of men, for more than fourteen hundred years, have been so devoid of candor, and so deeply involved in prejudice, as not to look for that kind and degree of evidence in favor of this practice, which the nature of the case fairly required? Or shall we rather conclude that the disbelief and disuse of infant baptism, among a small proportion of christians, in some part of this long period, has been partly owing to their want of candor, in demanding such a kind and degree of evidence as the nature of the case never fairly required? This last is certainly the most fair and candid supposition. It is true, indeed, some individuals have renounced infant baptism, contrary to the bias of tradition, and the prejudices of education; but candor even here must allow that there has been but a very small number who have done this, without apparent motives of personal disaffection or private interest. Where can a Baptist congregation be found, in this part of the world, which did not originate from some contention or disaffection among some other denomination of christians? And do not the dissensions and divisions among other denomina-

* Among all the late publications upon this subject, Dr. Lathrop's Sermons, with Mr. Perkins' Letters, are especially worthy of perusal.

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tions now serve to increase the number of Baptists, faster than any other cause that can be assigned? If we may, in this case, judge of the weight of evidence, by the degree of conviction which it affords unprejudiced and impartial persons, we must conclude that the evidence in favor of infant baptism is much stronger than the evidence against it, and sufficient to gain the belief of those who examine the subject with a proper degree of fairness and candor.

2. If infant baptism be a Bible doctrine, then those who deny it are in a great practical error. They look upon all churches who practice infant baptism, as unfit for their communion in divine ordinances. And this leads them to take every proper, not to say improper, method, to build up their own churches, and to pull down those of all other denominations. Such conduct is directly calculated to create animosities, contentions and divisions, among those who ought to be united in their affections and exertions to build up the Redeemer's kingdom. Christians may err in many points of speculation, without being necessarily led to oppose each other in practice. But the denial of infant baptism is of a practical nature, and constrains all who are sincere in the denial, to oppose all the rest of the Christian world in the order and discipline of the church. The error in sentiment appears small, when compared with the fruit of it in practice. But it ought to be viewed in its full length and breadth; that is, in its nature and consequences. And it is to be hoped that none will embrace a sentiment which draws after it such great and disagreeable consequences, without the most candid deliberation, and the most irresistible conviction of its being founded on the word of God.

3. It appears from what has been said, that those who believe the doctrine of infant baptism, cannot act consistently in doing any thing which tends to destroy the belief and practice of it. If it be the duty of believers to baptize their infant seed, and if they believe this to be their duty, they ought to use all their influence to maintain and promote their sentiment and practice in the world in general, and especially in their own churches and congregations. They have no right, therefore, either in the sight of God, or of their own consciences, unnecessarily to aid, assist or countenance those, who appear to be aiming to discredit and overthrow the belief and practice of infant baptism. And we have reason to believe that those who deny this doctrine always aim to do all they can to overthrow it. We certainly have reason to believe this, if they are honest in their sentiments, and really seek to promote the cause of truth. For, one of the most effectual ways of promoting truth, is to oppose and destroy error. They ought, therefore, to desire and to

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endeavor to overthrow the opinion and practice of infant baptism. And upon this ground, we have reason to conclude that, when any preachers of this denomination come into our parishes to preach, they mean to use all their influence to build up their own cause, which they think is the cause of truth, and to pull down and destroy our cause, which they believe is the cause of error, and really displeasing to the great Head of the church. But if we are as honest in our principles as they are in theirs, then it is as much our duty to oppose their sentiments, as it is their duty to oppose ours.

We blame them not for being zealous in promoting their own principles and practice, so long as they believe they are founded in the word of God. They ought to be zealous in promoting what they verily think to be the cause of truth. But we have a right to blame them, if they resist the evidence of truth in adopting their opinion; or if they do not profess to aim at propagating their opinion, when they actually do and ought to aim at it; or if they take improper methods to gain proselytes, such as playing the bishop in another man's diocese, and endeavoring to injure his character and influence, by indirect and groundless insinuations and aspersions. These things excepted, we approve the zeal and diligence of our brethren, in promoting what they think to be truth, and destroying what they think to be error. At the same time, we beseech those who believe they are in a great practical error, to use all proper means in their power to counteract and prevent the unhappy consequences of their opinion and practice. And if not inviting their teachers to preach; or if not going to hear them preach; or if speaking against their principles in private; or if disputing with them on the subject of baptism; if any or all these methods serve to prevent the spread of their sentiments, we ought to employ them to answer so important and desirable a purpose. This is what I think; and I am willing to speak what I think. I have nothing to conceal upon this subject. I mean to be frank and open in opposing every thing which appears to disserve the opinion and practice of infant baptism. And were it in my power, I would impress the minds of all who peruse this discourse, with a deep sense of the importance of forming the same resolution, and of going into the same practice.

4. If it be the duty of believing parents to offer up their infant seed to God in baptism, then it highly concerns unbelieving parents to become believers, and do their duty to God and to their children. They injure God, they injure themselves, and their dear offspring, by living in unbelief. Every time they behold the ordinance of baptism administered to

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infants, they are strikingly reproved for the hardness of their hearts, and their sinful neglect of their own souls and the souls of their children. If parents neglect to honor God, they may expect their children will neglect to honor them. If parents neglect to do their duty to their children, they may expect their children will neglect to do their duty to them. If parents neglect to promote the salvation of their children, they may expect that the blood of their children's souls will be required at their hands. It is melancholy, indeed, to behold so many rising, and, in other respects, promising families, living in the neglect of divine institutions. They are practically promoting the cause of infidelity, and tempting their children to become infidels. They are pursuing a path which will lead them and theirs to inevitable ruin. Let them be entreated to think on their ways, and remember the God of their fathers, and the Father of their spirits. Let them immediately embrace the gospel, that they may have a right to devote themselves and their children to God, and be in the way of his own appointment, to secure all the blessings which he has promised to believers and their seed, in his new and everlasting covenant.

To conclude, Let believing parents, who have devoted their children to God in baptism, be urged to fulfil their own voluntary vows and engagements. It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay. But you have vowed, and must fulfil. It is out of your power to cancel the bond of your covenant. The nature and obligation of this you clearly understand, though you may be in a great measure ignorant of the design of God in the institution of baptism. It is of great importance that you keep covenant with God, and faithfully discharge your obligations to him, and to your children. He has committed them to your care and instruction, and you have engaged to bring them up for him. If you are unfaithful and negligent, you will displease God, you will justify those who neglect to baptize their children, and confirm those in their error who deny the doctrine and practice of infant baptism. But if you are faithful, you will have reason to hope that salvation will come to you, and to your children, and to your children's children, to the latest generations. Amen.

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PART XXIII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

SERMONS LXXIX.—LXXX.

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SERMON LXXIX.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER A STANDING ORDINANCE.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. — 1 Corinthians, xi. 26.

God often appointed standing memorials to perpetuate great and extraordinary events. Aaron's rod which budded, and the pot of manna, were both deposited in the ark, to be lasting memorials of two remarkable instances of the divine conduct. The stones taken from the bottom of Jordan, were set up as monuments of the miraculous passage of the Israelites through that river upon dry ground. The Passover was instituted to perpetuate the memorable deliverance of the first born of Israel from the plague that destroyed the first born of the Egyptians. And the apostle tells us in the text, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper was appointed to commemorate the most marvellous scene Christ ever passed through. "For," says the apostle to christians, "as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." He does not say that the sacrament is a memorial of Christ's incarnation, or of his birth, or of his temptation in the wilderness, or of his preaching, or of his working miracles; but he expressly says, in distinction from all these things, it is a memorial of the *death* he suffered on the cross. This, then, is the truth now to be considered:

That the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a standing memorial of Christ's death. I shall,

I. Show that this is the design of the sacrament. And,

II. Why it was appointed for this purpose.

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I. I am to show that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is a standing memorial of Christ's death. We know nothing about the design of the sacrament but what we learn from scripture. If we turn to the 26th of Matthew, we shall there find an account of this institution, given by him who appointed it. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Here the bread and wine, which are the elements of the sacrament, are expressly said to be the body and blood of Christ; that is, emblems or symbols of his body and blood. And this shows that they are designed to commemorate that body of Christ which was broken, and that blood of Christ which was shed at his death, and at no other time. In this sense the apostle evidently understood the words of Christ. For he asks christians, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In the next chapter he says, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." This last clause confines the remembrance of Christ, in the sacrament, to his death alone. From this it evidently appears that the sacrament was designed to be a memorial of his death in particular, and not of his life in general, nor of any thing he said or did, before his last sufferings and death on the cross. This is the scriptural and true account of Christ's design in appointing a standing memorial of his death.

I now proceed to the main thing proposed.

II. To show why the sacrament was designed to commemorate his death in particular. And here I would observe,

1. That the death of Christ was the most striking scene that ever took place with respect to him, or any other being. There were a great many singular circumstances which rendered his death peculiarly striking. He had rendered himself very conspicuous by the life he had lived, the doctrines he had preached, and by the miracles he had wrought. He had drawn the atten-

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tion and interested the feelings of all classes of people. When he was arrested in the garden, hauled before three human tribunals, and condemned to die and bear his cross to Mount Calvary, he was surrounded by an immense multitude of visible and invisible spectators. All Jerusalem, and almost all Judea, were convened to celebrate the Passover, and were naturally led by curiosity, affection and disaffection, to be spectators of the amazing spectacle of the crucifixion of a personage who had professed to be the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Some of the spectators had probably been either raised from the dead, or been cured of their bodily diseases, or had heard him preach. The evil spirits which he had cast out, and legions of others knew him. The angels of heaven knew him. One strengthened him in his agony in the garden. Twelve legions were at hand and at his command, and multitudes more of the heavenly hosts. He was "seen of angels," the apostle says, who were deeply affected by his death. So were all the other spectators. For we are told that "all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned." The tremendous earthquake, which rent the veil of the temple in twain, and the preternatural darkness which covered the face of the world, concurred to solemnize the scene. The circumstances of the death of the Lord of glory rendered it highly proper and important that he should appoint a standing memorial of the solemn and affecting event. It deserved to be kept in everlasting remembrance by all who saw it, and by all intelligent beings who should ever become acquainted with it.

2. The death of Christ was the strongest expression of his marvellous love to this sinful and perishing world. It is true that he expressed his love to mankind in various other ways. His consenting to become incarnate; his becoming a servant; his submitting to poverty, reproach and opposition, in the course of his life; his free, instructive and compassionate conversation; his beneficent miracles; and, in a word, all his benevolent exertions wherever he went, were so many expressions of love to mankind. But all these expressions of love were nothing, in comparison with the love he displayed in dying the just for the unjust. For one person to die for another is the strongest expression of human benevolence. So Christ himself said. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But for a friend to lay down his life for a friend, or for a father to lay down his life for a son, or for a prince to lay down his life for a subject, is an expression of love infinitely below that of the Creator's laying down his life for a creature, who deserves to die for his unreasonable

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and inexcusable rebellion. But this Christ did, when he died for sinners. And by doing this, he exhibited the strongest expression of love to guilty creatures, that ever was, or ever will be, or ever can be exhibited. And for this reason, his death deserves a standing and perpetual memorial. Accordingly, Christ appointed the sacrament as a memorial of his death, rather than as a memorial of any other scenes through which he passed in the days of his flesh. As angels and men, before Christ's incarnation, looked forward to his death in order to see the strongest expression of his love to sinners, so they must now eternally look back to his death without the gates of Jerusalem, to see still stronger expressions of it. Nothing will ever appear in the whole work of redemption so expressive of the superlative love of Christ to the church, as his extremely painful and humiliating death on the cross. And this is a good reason why a memorial of it should be appointed to keep it in grateful and everlasting remembrance.

3. It was the death of Christ, which alone made atonement for the sins of the world, and laid a foundation for the pardon and salvation of all penitent, believing sinners. His incarnation, his miracles, his exemplary life, and all his humiliation, self denial and obedience, had no tendency to atone for sin. Had he displayed all these benevolent feelings in any other way than by his death, he would have made no atonement at all. All the scenes he passed through from his birth to his agony in the garden, were only preparative for the last great scene of his death, in which he made his soul an offering for sin. The whole current of scripture places the atonement entirely in his death. All the sacrifices under the law, which were typical of his atonement, plainly denoted that it should consist in blood. Indeed, God expressly told his ancient people, that it was blood which made atonement in all their expiatory sacrifices. Both the prophets and apostles teach us the same thing. Isaiah says, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all." "And he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul *unto death*." Daniel says, "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself." When the apostle John saw Jesus coming to him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." The Lamb of God which took away sin in Israel, was the paschal lamb that was slain, and whose *blood* made atonement. So Christ the Lamb of God was appointed from the foundation of the world to be slain, and by his

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blood to make atonement for the whole human race. He said himself, that he was the good shepherd, who would lay down his life for his sheep; and if he were lifted up, that is, on the cross, he would draw all men to him. The apostle Paul declares, that God purchased the church with his own *blood;* that he set forth Christ to be a propitiation, through faith in his *blood.* But in his epistle to the Hebrews, he treats upon the subject of the atonement more largely, and explains the typical sacrifices with the utmost plainness and precision. He says that Christ offered but one sacrifice, and that was the sacrifice of himself on the cross. After speaking of the high priest under the law, who typified him, he says, "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" And to put it beyond all doubt that it was the death of Christ which made atonement, he goes on to observe, that Christ offered but *one* sacrifice, which was the sacrifice of his life. "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others. For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And, "so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." Thus Christ died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. It was his expiatory death only, that could bring sinners to God, that is, open the way for God to pardon and receive sinners into his favor. Nothing but his death could display God's displeasure at sin, and so render it consistent with his holy character, to forgive those whom he had threatened to destroy. Now, this being the nature of Christ's death, we can clearly see why the sacrament should be appointed as an everlasting memorial of it. All Christ did before his death, and all he has done since, and all he ever will do hereafter, depended upon his death, and without it, would be of no avail to the salvation of sinners. His death virtually involved and consummated the great work of redemption, which he came into the world to accomplish. This he proclaimed with his dying breath, when he said, "*It is finished.*" His death constituted and completed his character as the Saviour and Redeemer of sinners, and therefore it was in the highest degree proper, that the sacrament should be appointed, as a standing memorial of the most important

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event in the universe, until the final consummation of all things.

I shall conclude at present with two or three reflections.

1. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is no unmeaning ordinance. It is far more significant and instructive, than the Passover, which was a standing memorial of the distinguishing and sparing mercy of God towards the first born in Israel. It was designed, and evidently does set forth Jesus Christ as crucified before the eyes of all who partake of the symbols of his death. This was an astonishing and instructive view to the many thousands, and perhaps many millions, who were spectators of it. Though it may not be so affecting now to us, as it was to those spectators nearly two thousand years ago, yet it is more significant and instructive now, than it was while Christ was actually expiring on the cross. The infinite dignity of the Lord of glory, and the infinitely important design of his death, are far better known to us, than to either his friends or foes, who saw the solemn and interesting event. The symbols before us are suited to awaken our attention to the most glorious personage in the universe, and to the glorious fruits and effects of the astonishing love of God to the guilty, the wretched, and the perishing. The exhibition of a crucified Saviour before our eyes is a solemn address to our understandings, and calls for the most serious and fixed contemplation upon the most glorious truths and objects, which can employ the minds of the most exalted and holy creatures in heavenly places. The manifold wisdom of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ, and ought to be contemplated while celebrating the memorials of his death. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

2. This significant ordinance addresses your hearts, as well as your understandings, and calls for the most grateful affections to the Father and Son. We ought to love the Father, because he first loved us in sending his Son to die for us; and we ought to love the Son, because he first loved us in coming to seek and save them that are lost. And O, "that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

3. As the ordinance reminds you of Christ's giving himself for you, so it equally reminds you of your obligations of renew-

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edly giving yourselves to him. On every sacramental occasion, the love of Christ should constrain you to renew your solemn vows and engagements to him. He justly claims you, by the right of creation, and by the right of redemption, and by the right of dedication.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Since the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was appointed to be a memorial of Christ's death, we see a good reason why his pious followers should experience so much comfort, and derive so much benefit from attending it. We seldom read the lives of any pious persons, who do not thankfully mention the spiritual views, affections, and enjoyments they had experienced at the communion table. They speak of their frequently looking forward to it, preparing for it, and finding peculiar light, and joy, and comfort at it. This is easy to believe; for the time, the place, and circumstances of attending the sacrament, are all suited to bring the most glorious objects into view, and to awaken every holy and delightful affection towards them. Of all scenes in this world, the celebration of the memorials of Christ's death bears the liveliest resemblance of the enjoyments of the heavenly world. While christians are separated from the world, and sitting together in heavenly places, they often enjoy the promised presence of Christ, who has told them, that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he will be in the midst of them. Though his presence be invisible, yet it is sensible, by the happy effects which he produces in their hearts. He exerts his influence in producing faith, and love, and joy, and that peace, which passes all understanding. He gives them to realize what they shall be, and do, and enjoy, when they arrive at the mansions, which he has gone before to prepare for them. He causes them to feel as the apostle John did, when he said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." It is difficult for christians to keep their hearts in a devout and solemn frame, while they are necessarily employed in the common courses of life; but it is comparatively easy to fix their attention and affections upon spiritual and divine objects, when the world is shut out from them and divine things are clearly brought into view at the table of Christ, where his friends mutually promote each other's holy and devout affections. Indeed, the solemnities of a sacramental occasion, can scarcely fail of

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affecting the hearts of all the communicants, whether they are holy, or unholy, and of giving them sensible pain or pleasure. Those who keep their hearts in the love of God, while they sit under the bower of Christ, sit under it with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to their taste, and they joyfully anticipate the glory and blessedness of heaven. They experience the truth of Christ's gracious declaration, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

2. If the sacrament be designed to be a standing memorial of Christ's death, then those who never find any pleasure or satisfaction in attending this sacred ordinance, have reason to fear that they are real enemies to the cross of Christ, and to the whole gospel way of salvation. The whole gospel is founded upon the death of Christ, and if his conduct in coming into the world to suffer and die on the cross, was not an expression of divine wisdom and benevolence, then there is no wisdom or benevolence in the gospel; and all men who despise and reject it are to be justified and approved. But if the death of Christ was the only expedient that infinite wisdom and love could devise, for the recovery and salvation of this guilty and perishing world, then Christ, in coming into the world and dying a propitiatory sacrifice, displayed the highest and purest love in pouring out his soul unto death as a sacrifice and atonement for sin, and in opening the way for God to be just in justifying and pardoning every penitent and believing sinner. Those who do not love Christ for his dying love, hate him for it; and those who hate him for his death, hate the gospel, which is founded upon it. These are truths and objects too great and important to be viewed with indifference; they must be either loved or hated. Christ would not allow that any could be neuters in their feelings and conduct towards him and his gospel. He said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad." Those who love Christ, love the gospel, and take pleasure in commemorating the death of Christ, upon which the gospel is founded. This appears from the very nature of love, which delights in the objects upon which it is placed. And this appears from what they tell us concerning the comfort and benefit they have derived from commemorating the dying love of Christ, and the rich blessings which flow from it. The inference to be drawn from this is too plain to be denied, or doubted, that those who find no pleasure or satisfaction in attending the Lord's supper, are enemies to the cross of Christ, and opposed to the whole scheme of salvation revealed in the gospel. They are as really unqualified to attend the sacrament, as an Egyptian was to

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attend the Passover. Though really pious persons may sometimes feel torpid and stupid at the table of Christ, yet this is not always the case. And when this is the case, they feel differently from those who never loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Their stupidity is a burden to them, and they mourn for it; but the graceless rejoice that they are able to maintain their stupidity, and stifle the painful reflections which they have often felt while eating and drinking judgment to themselves. Their stupidity or remorse at the table of Christ, are nevertheless strong indications that they have no right in the sight of God to be where they are, and join externally in celebrating that sovereign and saving grace, which they internally hate and oppose. Their feelings and conduct are both extremely criminal and extremely dangerous, because highly displeasing to Christ, who has expressed his severe displeasure against such insincere professors. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

3. If the sacrament be a memorial of Christ's death, then none are duly prepared to observe it, who do not cordially approve of the vindictive justice of God. It was the vindictive justice of God, which rendered the death of Christ necessary, and which it was the design of his death to display. Had not God been possessed of the amiable attribute of vindictive justice, he might have saved sinners without any atonement at all. But he could not exercise pardoning mercy in contrariety to his holy and righteous disposition to punish sin, which he perfectly hated. And this amiable attribute of his nature he displayed, not by the obedience, but by the death of Christ on the cross. "For, says the apostle, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." God gave a brighter display of his hatred and disposition to punish sin, in the face of Jesus Christ on the cross, than he ever has given, or ever will give, in the punishment of fallen angels, or in the punishment of finally impenitent sinners under the gospel. To commemorate the death of Christ with proper feelings, is virtually to commemorate the brightest display of God's vindictive justice. And none can do this, with an unholy heart, which loves and justifies sin, and hates to see it punished according to its just desert. It is impossible cordially to celebrate the pure, disinterested love of God in sending his Son to die, and the pure, disinterested love of the Son in dying to display divine justice,

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without loving that justice which the death of Christ was designed to display, and did display. The grace of God and of Christ displayed in the sacrament, is sovereign grace, and founded upon vindictive justice, and cannot be loved and admired, without loving and admiring the justice upon which it is founded. This, communicants are too apt to overlook, when they celebrate the ordinance, which so strikingly displays divine grace in the face of Jesus Christ.

4. Since the sacrament was appointed to be a standing memorial of Christ's death, it is of great importance to keep up and maintain this sacred ordinance. The continuance of the Christian religion in the world, greatly, if not absolutely, depends upon the continuance of the memorial of Christ's death. If this memorial should cease, Christianity would naturally cease with it. It is principally owing to christians' observing the sacrament, that Christianity has been conveyed down to us from the primitive days of the gospel. If christians had neglected to attend and maintain this sacred ordinance for more than eighteen hundred years past, we have no reason to think that we should ever have heard of the person and death of Christ, or the religion which he taught. We and the whole world are indebted to the church of Christ, for maintaining the memorial of his death, and thereby maintaining his religion among men. We have abundant evidence of this from the well known fact, that in every nation and country, and town and parish, where the sacrament has been long neglected, religion has languished and died. Many seem to think, that it is of no importance to attend the sacrament, only on their own account and for their own personal benefit; but they forget the highest end to be answered by it, and for which it was principally appointed; that is, to show forth Christ's death till he come at the end of time. Those who sincerely love Christ, love his religion, and desire to see it spread and prevail in every part and every age of the world. And for this, above every other reason, they are bound to attend the sacrament, which is absolutely necessary to preserve the very existence of it in the world. I wish to impress this idea so deeply upon every mind, that it cannot be eradicated or forgotten. I have never urged any person to attend the sacrament, without being scripturally prepared; but I have often urged all who are scripturally prepared to attend it, not merely for their own benefit, but for the honor, preservation and promotion of religion from age to age, to the end of the world.

5. If the sacrament be a standing memorial of Christ's death, then we may see how little the gospel is prized by the great body of the Christian world. The gospel is enjoyed by some of the most numerous, most civilized, and most intelligent nations of

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the earth; and all who enjoy the gospel, except Jews and infidels, call themselves christians. But what a vast majority of the Christian world, despise and neglect the sacrament of the Lord's supper? And is not this practically rejecting Christ, and his gospel which is founded upon his death? And if despising and rejecting and neglecting the Lord's supper, be a visible evidence of despising and rejecting the gospel, then we have striking evidence how little the gospel is prized by those who enjoy and sit under it. How few professors are there in any denomination of christians, and how clearly does their neglect of the sacrament show how little they prize the gospel, in any part of the christian world! This is a visible criterion, by which Christ meant to distinguish the friends from the enemies of the gospel. He spake the parable of the gospel supper, to mark this distinction, and calls those who excused themselves from coming to his supper, his enemies that would not that he should reign over them. And he expressly said, that he would be ashamed of them who were ashamed to name his name, and observe the standing memorial of his death. Though the general neglect of attending the sacrament may not be a decisive evidence of the want of religion in every one that neglects it, yet it is a decisive evidence that religion is here declining; and that those who neglect attending the memorial of Christ's death, are practically increasing the declension of religion. Let the neglect continue and increase but a few years longer, as it has continued and increased for many years past, and this church, like many others, may become extinct. Where are the rising and middle generation? Are they to be seen at the table of Christ? But very few. How long will they be seen in the house of the Lord, when the table of the Lord shall become neglected and forsaken? If coming to the table of Christ is any evidence of love to him, then neglecting to come is an equal evidence of want of love to him. This evidence against themselves, many are exhibiting from Sabbath to Sabbath, and from sacrament to sacrament.

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SERMON LXXX.

THE NECESSITY OF ZEAL IN MAINTAINING DIVINE INSTITUTIONS.

And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. — John, ii. 17.

The occasion which led the disciples of Christ to recollect and quote this passage from the sixty-ninth Psalm, was a bold and astonishing act of duty, which they saw him perform in the temple at Jerusalem. When he came to that city to attend the Passover, which he never failed to attend at the proper time, "He found in the temple those that sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, and the changers of money, sitting. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." This was a surprizing act of zeal for the glory of God and the sanctity of divine institutions. The temple had been solemnly separated from a common to a sacred use, and consecrated to the peculiar service of God. No common or secular business ought to have been done in this sacred house; but some of the professed people of God had become so corrupt and presumptuous as to buy and sell in it, even in the presence of the priests, whose sacred office required them to maintain the purity of holy places and of holy things. But though they neglected their duty, yet Christ determined to maintain the honor of his Father's house and the purity of his instituted worship. Having made a scourge of small cords, he boldly went into the temple, where

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he not only drove out the sheep and oxen, but the buyers and sellers, whom he reproved with so much authority and solemnity that they lost all power to reply or to resist. "It is written," said he, "My house shall be called a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." This extraordinary act of purging the temple, demonstrated his holy and ardent zeal to maintain all the positive precepts and institutions of his Father's house, and at the same time exhibited a bright example, which all his followers ought to imitate. They ought to maintain, pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his word. To explain and enforce the duty of christians to be zealous in maintaining the positive duties of religion, it will be necessary,

I. To mention some of the positive duties of religion under the gospel.

II. To point out the distinction between positive and moral duties.

III. To consider how christians may maintain positive duties. And,

IV. To show why they should be zealous in maintaining these duties.

I. I am to mention some of the positive duties of religion under the gospel.

The duties of this kind were much more numerous under the legal, than they are under the gospel dispensation. Under the law, the times and places of public worship, together with a multitude of sacrifices, purifications, rites and ceremonies, were positively appointed. But all these positive duties which the laws of Moses enjoined, are now superseded and abolished by the Christian dispensation. It is not easy, however, to determine how far some positive duties, which were given before the law and under the law, are still binding upon christians. But since there is no occasion, in this discourse, to consider any such doubtful cases, I will mention only some of the plain and principal positive duties, which are enjoined in the New Testament.

Here the first duty to be mentioned is the observation of the Sabbath, or the keeping of one day in seven as holy time. Our Saviour not only observed the Sabbath himself, but declared that "the Sabbath was made for man," plainly intimating its perpetual obligation upon all men in the present life. With this duty the public and social worship of God is intimately connected. Christ attended the duties of the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and undoubtedly commanded his apostles, and through them all his followers, to keep the first, instead of the seventh day of the week, as a day of sacred rest and public worship.

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Accordingly we know that his apostles and his followers in general have, ever since his ascension, attended public worship on the first day of the week, which is emphatically styled the Lord's day. Christ expressly required his friends to profess his religion before the world; which is a duty binding upon all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Christ commanded that those who professed his religion publicly, should be baptized with water in the name of the sacred Trinity. Christ enjoined it upon his professed and baptized friends, to partake of bread and wine in commemoration of his death. And he moreover instituted a standing visible church, to be composed of such visible believers as can conveniently meet together in one place, to hear the gospel, observe its ordinances, and to exercise that mutual watch and discipline over one another, which tends to promote their purity, peace, and edification. To sum up the whole in a word, to keep the Sabbath, to worship God in public, to make a public profession of religion, to be baptized, to commemorate the death of Christ, to form into a church, or religious society, and to exercise a proper watch and discipline over one another, are the principal positive duties enjoined upon christians under the gospel dispensation.

II. The next thing proposed is, to point out the difference between positive and moral duties.

Though we may properly divide all duties into moral and positive, yet we ought not to magnify this distinction beyond reasonable bounds. It is often said, that moral duties are founded in the nature of things, and that they differ from positive duties principally in this respect. That there is a reason in the nature of things for moral duties, prior to their being commanded of God, is readily granted. But it is equally true, that there is a reason in the relation of things for all positive duties, prior to the divine precept which enjoins them. There is, indeed, some difference between the nature of things, and the relation of things. The relation of things is mutable, and the nature of things is immutable. But there may be as good a reason for a positive duty, arising from the relation of things, as for a moral duty, arising from the nature of things. As God is a being perfectly wise and holy, so he can no more act without reason, than he can act contrary to reason. He always sees a reason for every thing he does, before he acts; and he always sees a reason for every thing he requires, before he commands.

This holds equally true in regard to both moral and positive precepts. He requires moral duties, because he sees a good reason for them in the nature of things; and he requires positive duties, because he sees a good reason for them in the relation of things. He required his people of old to love him with

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all the heart, because he saw a good reason for it in the nature of things; and he required the same people to offer sacrifices, because he saw as good a reason for it in the then relation of things. God never acts capriciously or arbitrarily, from mere will or pleasure; but his will or pleasure in all his commands is founded in a solid reason, arising either from the nature of things, or from the relation of things, which renders his will or pleasure perfectly wise and good.

The proper distinction, therefore, between moral and positive duties is this: Moral duties are founded in reasons which we are able to discover by the mere light of nature; but positive duties are founded in reasons which we cannot discover without the aid of divine revelation. This may be illustrated by a contrast between these two species of duties. The light of nature teaches us that we ought to love God; but it does not teach us that we ought to rest one day in seven from all worldly employments. The light of nature teaches us that we ought to worship God; but it does not teach us that we ought to worship him in a public and social manner. The light of nature teaches us that we ought to obey God; but it does not teach us that we ought to bind ourselves to obey him, by publicly and solemnly engaging to obey him. The light of nature teaches us that we ought to fulfil our engagements to God; but it does not teach us that we ought to ratify our engagements by the rite of baptism. The light of nature teaches us that we ought to love Him who has died to save us; but it does not teach us that we ought to commemorate his love, by partaking of bread and wine in remembrance of him. In a word, the light of nature may teach us every moral duty; but it cannot teach us any positive duty. This is the only distinction between moral duties and positive; and this distinction exists only in our minds, and not in the mind of God, who comprehends the relations as well as the nature of things, and who sees as good reasons for positive, as for moral duties. And could we as clearly see the relation and connection of *all* things, as we see the nature of *some* things, we should see as good reasons for positive duties, arising from the relations of things, as we do for moral duties, arising from the nature of things; and should have no more need of a divine revelation to discover positive, than to discover moral duties. It is true, that some moral duties are more important than some positive duties; but since positive duties are founded in as much reason, and enjoined by as much authority, as moral duties, we are under no less obligation to obey all the positive, than all the moral duties required in the gospel.

This leads me to show,

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III. How christians may maintain the positive duties which the gospel enjoins upon them.

It properly belongs to professing christians to maintain all the institutions of the gospel. The great design of their being formed into distinct churches, or religious societies, is to make them the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As God formerly committed his sacred oracles and positive institutions to the care and trust of the Jewish church, so he has since committed his word and ordinances to the care and trust of the Christian church. "God hath set some *in the church*, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues." Again we read, "God gave some, apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." It appears from these passages, that all ecclesiastical power, as well as the word and ordinances of the gospel, are given to the church in the first place, and lodged in their hands for their edification and spiritual benefit. And upon this principle, the apostle calls the church, "the church of the living God, the *pillar* and *ground* of the truth." The members of every Christian church are bound to use all their influence to maintain the word and worship of God and all his sacred ordinances, in their primitive purity and simplicity. Here then I would observe,

1. That one way by which every member of the church may do something to maintain the positive duties of religion, is by his own exemplary conduct. Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They strictly and constantly attended upon every divine institution, which had a direct tendency to maintain the honor and practice of all instituted duties. While our Saviour tabernacled in flesh, he paid a sacred regard to all divine institutions. When he went to John to be baptized, the reason that he assigned was, that he must fulfil all righteousness. He considered baptism as a positive duty, which, as a Jew and a priest, he was bound to observe. Being made under the law, he meant by his practice to maintain all its positive institutions. Accordingly, he attended not only the Passover, but the public worship of God, and all the rites and ceremonies of divine appointment. This example all his professed friends ought to follow, and in this way maintain the public worship of God and all his holy ordinances.

The more strictly and constantly every member of the church observes the Sabbath, attends public worship, and practices all the positive duties of religion, the more he honors and main-

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tains the special ordinances of the gospel. Every christian may have great influence, by his pious example, to render divine institutions truly amiable and respectable in the eyes of the world. Though the neglect of moral duties is a greater reproach to professors of religion than the neglect of positive duties, yet the strict performance of positive duties is a greater honor to their religion than the observance of moral duties. It is by the strict observance of positive duties, that christians distinguish themselves from the rest of mankind, who generally, for their own reputation, pay regard to the common duties of morality. Men may be very moral and reputable, without paying any respect to divine institutions; but men cannot be very religious, without paying a sacred regard to all the positive duties of Christianity. The very first step, therefore, which every member of the church should take, in order to maintain the honor and purity of divine institutions, is to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, which will give weight to every thing else he may be called to say or do to promote the same end.

2. The members of the church ought to cultivate mutual love and watchfulness, in order to preserve divine ordinances in their purity. They are mutually bound to love as brethren, and to promote each other's spiritual good. As members of the same body, they have engaged to meet together in the same place, to join in the same duties, and to unite in the same Christian communion and fellowship. This gives them peculiar opportunities of exercising all the offices of brotherly love and watchfulness. Brotherly love will produce that brotherly care and watchfulness which the word of God requires. It is written, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him." The apostle gives a similar admonition to christians. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." If errors and deviations from the path of duty were seasonably checked and reproved, many great evils might be prevented from coming into, and corrupting the church. Christian watchfulness has a direct tendency to prevent the spread of religious errors and corruptions among any church or religious society. This method Christ took to purge the temple. He sharply rebuked those who presumed to profane his Father's house and pour contempt upon sacred things. His rebukes carried conviction, and produced the desired effect. It becomes the members of every church to be equally watchful and faith-

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ful. If they observe any of their brethren going astray, in respect to sentiment or practice, they ought to take the first proper opportunity to converse with them in the spirit of love and tenderness, and faithfully warn them of their danger, and exhort them to reformation and repentance. The apostle suggests a most powerful motive to induce christians to exercise such faithfulness towards each other. "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." I must add,

3. The professors of religion ought to unite in the exercise of that holy discipline, which Christ has appointed for the express purpose of reforming transgressors, or excluding them from the church. This mode of discipline we find enjoined upon christians in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Though different denominations of christians have adopted different modes of church discipline, yet they have all agreed, that some mode of discipline ought to be maintained and exercised. But as this is a duty which requires peculiar tenderness, fidelity and self denial, churches in general have, from age to age, been too negligent in keeping up a proper care, and watchfulness, and authority over their delinquent members, which has opened the door to innumerable errors in doctrine and practice. The apostles exhorted christians to be very faithful in maintaining a strict discipline over their brethren who transgressed the laws of Christ, and violated their own covenant obligations. And when they were faithful in this respect, their fidelity was crowned with success. This appears from the good effect of Christian discipline in the church of Corinth in particular. Let any church properly exercise that discipline over their members which Christ has appointed, and they will have great reason to hope that they shall be able to prevent or purge out every essential error in doctrine and practice, and carry conviction to all around them of their own sincerity, and of the beauty and importance of true religion. It now remains to show,

IV. Why christians should be zealous in maintaining the purity and simplicity of divine institutions.

Zeal always has respect to some external action, and not to any mere immanent exercise of the mind. We may properly say that a man pursues an object zealously; but we cannot properly say that he zealously loves or hates that object. But no man ever pursues an object zealously, unless it appears to him to be an object not only very desirable, but very important or difficult to obtain. One duty, therefore, may require the exercise of zeal, and not another. Though Christ always paid

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perfect obedience to his Father's will, yet he did not exercise zeal in the performance of every duty. He often conversed and acted with great calmness and serenity, without the least appearance of zeal; but he never failed to exercise a holy and fervent zeal, whenever some difficult and important duty was to be performed. It is now natural to inquire, why christians should be more zealous in maintaining divine institutions, than in discharging many other religious duties.

1. They ought to be zealous in performing this duty, because it is extremely difficult to perform. Those who abuse, or profane divine ordinances, are averse from being rebuked and restrained, and scarcely ever fail of resenting and opposing any thing that is said or done to rebuke and restrain them. Solomon observes, that "he that reproveth a scorner, getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man, getteth to himself a blot." Christ was hated, reproached and opposed, because he testified of the world that their works were evil. The same spirit still reigns in the breasts of transgressors. They will manifest their resentment and opposition towards all who attempt to rebuke or restrain them. To meet and overcome this great and formidable difficulty, requires peculiar zeal in the professors of religion. It was owing to a want of zeal in the Jewish priests, that they were afraid to rebuke and restrain those who profaned the house of God. Nor can it be owing to any thing but the want of holy zeal in the followers of Christ, that so many corrupt doctrines and corrupt practices have been suffered to creep in and prevail, among the once pure and flourishing churches in this land. But such a pure and fervent zeal as glowed in the breast of Christ, will embolden his true followers to stem the torrent of error and corruption, and maintain the purity of divine ordinances in the face of the boldest corrupters. True zeal takes away that fear of man which bringeth a snare, and enables christians to triumph over all opposition in the path of duty. How extremely difficult it was to purify the Jewish church, after it had been corrupted by idolatrous priests and princes! But how often did the zeal of pious priests and princes bear down all opposition, and bring back the deluded and corrupted to the true worship of the true God! Nothing but a pure and fervent zeal ever did, or ever will prompt the friends of God to surmount the great and formidable difficulties, which lie in the way of maintaining the worship and ordinances of God pure and entire. But,

2. The importance as well as the difficulty of preserving the purity of divine institutions, ought to inspire christians with peculiar zeal in faithfully discharging this duty. Though the instituted forms of religion may be maintained, without main-

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taining religion itself, yet religion itself cannot be maintained, without maintaining its instituted forms. These are the bulwarks of religion, which its enemies never fail to attack, in order to bring it into neglect and contempt. The enemies of the Jewish church gained their greatest advantage against it, by attacking its sacred rites and ceremonies; and those who have corrupted Christian institutions, have done the greatest injury to the Christian church. Christ has been most deeply wounded in the house of his friends, who have either neglected, perverted, or corrupted his holy ordinances. False professors of religion were the principal instruments of introducing those errors and corruptions into the seven churches of Asia, which finally destroyed them. By persons of the same character and disposition, were all the idolatry, errors and superstition of the church of Rome introduced, which have defaced Christianity, and spread infidelity through the Christian world. The whole history of the church of God teaches us, that if we suffer the Sabbath, the sacraments, and the positive duties of religion, to be neglected, perverted, or corrupted, we shall certainly find, that Christianity will die in our hands. This is a solemn consideration, which ought to awaken the warmest zeal in the breasts of all sincere christians, to maintain the purity of all divine institutions, upon which the very existence of religion depends. Zeal in pursuing any object, ought to rise in proportion to the importance of the object pursued. There is no duty, therefore, in which christians ought to exercise a more enlightened and ardent zeal, than in maintaining those special ordinances of the gospel, which are absolutely necessary to promote the cause, and enlarge the kingdom of Christ.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If positive duties, which cannot be discovered by the light of nature, are as much founded in reason as moral duties, then we may justly conclude, that a divine revelation has always been necessary. This is denied by infidels, who maintain that the light of nature is sufficient to teach moral agents all moral duties which are founded in reason, and which they can be bound to perform. They say, if God should command his creatures to do any thing which is not founded in reason, and which they could not discover by the proper use of their rational powers, his positive command would not lay them under moral obligation to obey; because his positive command could not make that right which was not right before, nor that duty which was not duty before. So that the very supposition of his giving his creatures a revelation, which contains positive precepts, is palpably absurd, being altogether unnecessary and useless.

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The whole plausibility of this mode of reasoning arises from a great mistake, which is, that there can be no reasons for any divine command, which are not discoverable by the light of nature. But it appears from what has been said, that there always are as good reasons for positive, as for moral duties; and therefore God may, with equal propriety and authority, enjoin both upon any of his intelligent creatures, who stand in need of a divine revelation to teach them positive duties in particular, which they cannot discover by their mere intellectual powers. Adam, in his primitive state of innocence, stood in need of a divine revelation, to teach him what fruits of the earth he might use for food; what business he might pursue; what day he might rest from labor; and how he might spend that day of rest. These were positive duties, which he could not discover by the light of nature, and which he needed a divine revelation to teach him. After he sinned and incurred the divine displeasure, he stood in greater need of a farther revelation, to teach him how he might escape deserved punishment, and obtain the forfeited favor of his offended Sovereign. His posterity likewise have stood in need of the same revelation. As the gospel was not founded in the nature, but in the relation of things, so it could not be discovered by the light of nature. God, indeed, saw good reasons in the relation of things, to provide an atonement for the sins of the world, and to appoint those positive duties which are necessary for men to perform, in order to obtain salvation through the atonement provided. There are now just as good reasons for all the positive duties of the gospel, as for the gospel itself; and just as good reasons for a divine revelation, as for these positive duties. And since a new relation or order of things has arisen in consequence of the plan of redemption, God has revealed new positive duties to the angels of light. He has commanded them to worship Christ as Mediator, to attend Christ in his mediatorial work, and to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. These are duties which angels could no more discover by the light of nature, than Adam could discover the duty of offering sacrifices by the light of nature. But all such positive duties, of angels and men, are founded in as good reasons as any moral duties whatever. Hence it appears that all intelligent creatures stand in need of a divine revelation, to teach them those positive duties which they could not possibly discover without it.

2. If positive duties are founded in as good reasons as moral duties, then no universal rule can be given to determine which ought to give way to the other, when they come in competition. It seems to be a general opinion, that positive duties ought always to give way to moral, when the one or the other must

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be omitted. And those who maintain this opinion, lay great weight upon what our Saviour said upon this point. It is true, he said some things which seem to give the preference to moral duties, and to intimate that they ought generally to be performed when positive duties come in competition. When the Pharisees blamed him for eating with publicans and sinners, he replied, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This seems to intimate, that he considered seeking the spiritual good of sinners as a moral duty which ought to be performed in preference to a positive duty. He suggested the same idea in answer to the Pharisees on another occasion, when they complained of his disciples for plucking and eating ears of corn on the Sabbath. He first mentioned the case of David in eating the show bread; and then the conduct of the priests in laboring on the Sabbath in performing their official duty; and finally justifies them all, by repeating the text which he had once before cited, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." He moreover blamed the Scribes and Pharisees for paying tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. But why did Christ give this preference to moral duties? It could not be because they were founded in better reasons than positive duties, and on that account of higher obligation. For we have shown, that positive duties are founded in as good reasons, and enjoined by as good authority, as moral duties. Christ knew, that the Jews paid more regard to positive rites and ceremonies and even human traditions, than to moral injunctions; and he meant to reprove them for their superstition and hypocrisy, but not to weaken their obligation to perform positive duties. Accordingly he adds, "These [moral duties] ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Since then, positive duties are as well founded and as expressly commanded as moral duties, they are absolutely equal in point of obligation; and, therefore, the only proper way to determine which ought to give way to the other is, to determine which, at the present time, is of most necessity or importance to be done. When moral duties come in competition with each other, the more important must be done, and the less important deferred. Prayer is a moral duty; but a man ought to defer that duty, if his neighbor's house is on fire and requires his immediate attendance. The circumcising of a child on the eighth day was a positive duty under the law, and the necessity of the case required it to be done at that particular time, in preference to

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a moral duty. The truth is, sometimes one moral duty ought to give way to another moral duty; sometimes one positive duty ought to give way to another positive duty; sometimes one positive duty ought to give way to another moral duty; and sometimes one moral duty ought to give way to another positive duty. This point cannot be determined by any universal rule, but must be left to the decision of every one's conscience, according to the circumstances of the present time.

3. If christians ought to be zealous in maintaining the positive duties and institutions of the gospel, then all who have experienced a saving change are under indispensable obligations to profess religion and attend divine ordinances. There are many, in almost all our congregations, who think they have passed from death unto life and cordially embraced the Saviour, that live in the neglect of naming his name, and of attending the sacraments which he has appointed. Though they mean to perform every moral duty, and dare not neglect the reading and hearing of the word of God, nor the duty of calling upon his name; yet they imagine they may safely and excusably live in neglect of baptism and the Lord's supper. But in this they are greatly deceived. Christ requires them not only to believe his gospel, but to profess his name before the world. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Again he says, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is extremely difficult to see how any, who allowedly live in the neglect of professing religion, and of observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, can justly entertain a hope of salvation, any more than those who live in the neglect of faith, repentance or prayer. It is true, the mere professing of religion, and the attending upon the sacraments, are mere positive duties; but they are founded in reason and commanded by divine authority, which gives them all the weight and obligation of moral duties. And it is presumed, that none have a right to think or say, that men are more excusable for neglecting positive duties than those which are strictly moral. No doubt men may be saved, though they should neglect, for a while, some moral duties; and so they undoubtedly may, though they should neglect for a while, some positive duties; but still they would be highly criminal for their neglect in either, or both cases. And their criminality would certainly weaken, if not destroy their hopes of pardon and acceptance in the sight of God. This ought to alarm all those who are dreaming that they are the friends of Christ, and walk-

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ing in the path to heaven, while they are afraid or ashamed to do whatsoever he has commanded them.

4. If christians should be zealous to maintain the purity of divine institutions, then they should be very strict and faithful in admitting none into their holy fellowship, but such as appear, in the judgment of charity, to be sincere friends to Christ. None but such are truly worthy to come to the table of the Lord, and commemorate his dying love. He does not allow any to come to his holy supper, who are not clothed with the wedding garment, or possessed of saving grace. And though christians cannot look into the hearts of candidates for the communion, yet they can and ought to judge of their piety by their fruits. Christ has drawn the characters of his true disciples, and they should admit none to unite with them in his holy ordinances, who are destitute of those visible signs of saving grace. It is their indispensable duty to require a credible profession of real holiness, of those whom they admit as members of their body. They have no right to lower the terms of communion, in condescension to any who may desire to come unprepared. And a proper zeal for the honor of Christ, and for the peace and purity of the church, will constrain them to be strict in examining the characters and qualifications of those whom they receive to communion. This is the first and most effectual method they can take, to promote the purity and prevent the corruption of the church. It is much easier to keep corrupt persons out of the church, than to prevent their doing mischief after they are once in it. "A little leaven," says the apostle in this case, "leaveneth the whole lump." It is while men sleep that the enemy sows tares. It is while christians grow careless and unfaithful, that bad men creep into the church, and corrupt it. Every minister and private brother, therefore, ought to exercise a peculiar zeal, fidelity and vigilance, in admitting members into the church, in order to maintain, if possible, all the doctrines, duties and institutions of the gospel pure and uncorrupt.

5. If christians ought to be zealous in maintaining the purity of divine institutions, then they are responsible for the errors and corruptions which spring up and prevail in the churches to which they belong. It is generally owing to some fault in them, that unworthy members gain admission into the church; and it must always be their fault, if they do not either reclaim or exclude them, after they become visibly erroneous or corrupt. Christ has clearly pointed out their duty in respect to preserving the purity of his sacred institutions; and if they neglect to perform it, they stand justly responsible for the evil consequences of their neglect. How severely did the apostle reprove the

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church of Corinth, for neglecting to discipline the incestuous person! And how much more sharply did Christ rebuke the seven churches of Asia, for their unfaithfulness towards the erroneous and corrupt members who were bringing reproach and ruin upon them! Christ still walks in the midst of his golden candlesticks, and observes the conduct of his churches. They will have a solemn account to give, if they suffer religion to languish in their hands, and the table of the Lord to become contemptible, by their negligence and unfaithfulness. It highly concerns all the professors of religion, at the present day of deep declension, to become more watchful, and to strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die.

6. If christians ought to be zealous in maintaining the purity of divine institutions, then it is a mark of real sincerity in those who actually manifest such a zeal. It is found by observation and experience, that few, if any, who are strict and conscientious in the exercise of church discipline, escape the displeasure and reproach not only of those whom they censure, but even of all who are inwardly enemies to the cause of Christ. These persons are ready to put the worst construction upon the views and conduct of faithful christians, who are active and zealous in watching over, reproving, and censuring the erroneous, corrupt, or disorderly. They will, if they can, make themselves and others believe, that this is a false zeal, which ought to be hated and condemned. But the sincere friends of Christ, who express their zeal for his glory and the purity of his sacred ordinances, deserve universal approbation and esteem, instead of reproach and contempt. A zeal according to knowledge in the exercise of church discipline, is one of the most rare and amiable traits in the Christian character. It is a signal expression of true self denial, to take up the cross, and suffer reproach for the cause of Christ, and for the saving benefit of those who are wandering in the paths of fatal error and delusion. Christians never act more in character, and give better evidence of the sincerity of their hearts, than while they are displaying a fervent zeal to purge out errors and corruptions from the church of Christ.

7. If christians should be zealous in maintaining gospel discipline, then those who are the subjects of it ought to be unfeignedly thankful to their brethren for their labor of love. It is in them an expression of pure self denial, to pursue the steps which Christ has appointed to reclaim offenders, who are injuring themselves, their best friends, and the cause which they have solemnly engaged to promote. And if they are true penitents, they will hear the friendly admonition of their brethren, confess their offences, and heal, as far as possible, the wounds

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which they have given to Christ in the house of his friends. Instead of complaining of the zeal and fidelity of their fellow christians, they will return them their grateful acknowledgments for their benevolent exertions to save them from the path of the destroyer. This will give the most satisfaction to their own minds, and be the best method they can take to regain the charity and confidence of the church, who will rejoice to see the happy issue of their fidelity and zeal. But if they are obstinate and incorrigible under the mild means of gospel discipline, they will throw themselves into the power of the great adversary of souls, and take the direct course to ruin themselves for ever.

To conclude: Let the professors of religion be urged to fulfil the important trusts reposed in them. Christ has given them the charge of his word, of his ordinances, and of the discipline of his house. He still walks in the midst of his golden candlesticks, and keeps his eye fixed upon his professed friends, to see whether they are faithful to him, to themselves, and to one another. He has given them power and opportunity of doing much for him, and bound them not only by his authority, but by his love, to be faithful and zealous in his cause. They have put their hand to the plow and must never look back. It will be highly displeasing to Christ, and extremely injurious to the souls of men, if they suffer corruptions in doctrine and practice to prevail, and let Christianity languish and die in their hands. But if they are constant, faithful and zealous in promoting piety, and maintaining the purity of divine ordinances, they will meet the final approbation of Christ, and a glorious recompense of reward. Amen.

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PART XXIV.

FUTURE STATE.

SERMONS LXXXI.—LXXXV.

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SERMON LXXXI.

THE SOULS OF SAINTS SURVIVE THEIR BODIES, AND GO DIRECTLY TO HEAVEN.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. — Luke, xxiii. 43.

After Christ had been tried and condemned at Pilate's bar, and conducted to Calvary, and nailed to the cross between two malefactors, the immense multitude who came together to witness the solemn scene, were deeply but differently affected. His mother, his brethren, his disciples, and all his friends, sympathized with him in his sufferings; but the Scribes and Pharisees, and Jews in general, reviled him in his agonies, and so did both the malefactors at first. But the views and feelings of one of them were soon entirely changed. Instead of reviling Christ, he condemned himself and the other malefactor, accepted the punishment of his iniquity, and cast himself upon the sovereign mercy of the Saviour, while he was actually making his soul a sacrifice for sin. The conversion of this penitent malefactor was sudden and signal. He remained stout hearted until the miraculous darkness, which overspread the earth at that time, alarmed his fears, awakened his conscience, and brought him penitently to cry for mercy. So Luke relates the astonishing fact. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged, *railed* on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou com-

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est into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Christ undoubtedly fulfilled his promise to this penitent believer, and carried his soul directly to the mansions of the blessed. This instance naturally leads us to conclude,

That the souls of saints survive their bodies, and go directly to heaven. I shall show,

I. That the souls of saints survive their bodies. And,

II. That they go directly to heaven.

I. We are to consider, that the souls of saints survive their bodies. Death consists in the dissolution of the connection between the soul and body. It appears from the account given of the crucifixion of Christ and the malefactors, that they all properly died, or their spirits were separated from their bodies, and actually survived them. "The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and *saw that he was dead already*, they brake not his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." Though none have denied that the malefactors died a proper, natural death, yet some have denied that Christ did; but we have more evidence that he died, than that the malefactors died. For God ordered it that one of the soldiers should pierce his side, even to his heart, from which issued blood and water, the certain symptom of death. This was of great importance to be known and believed; for if it had not been proved to the conviction and satisfaction of his enemies that he really died, they might have denied, with some plausibility, that he ever rose from the dead, upon the truth of which the whole gospel is founded. As it is evident that Christ and the two that were crucified with him actually died, so it is equally evident that their souls survived their bodies after death. The souls of Christ and the penitent malefactor certainly went directly to heaven; and the soul of the other, like that of Judas, went to its own place. Since the soul of Christ and that of the believing malefactor survived their bodies, it seems as though there were no room to doubt that the souls of all saints survive their bodies and retain their sensibility and activity after death; but there are both philosophers and divines who call this truth in question. I therefore proceed to adduce some plain and conclusive arguments to support it.

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1. The scripture plainly represents the soul to be different and distinct from the body. It appears from the first formation of man, that his body and soul were distinct and essentially different in their original qualities. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Solomon gives a similar representation of the body and soul of man, as distinct and essentially different in their original qualities. Speaking of death, he says, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." "Farthermore," says the apostle Paul, "we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" In these passages, the body and soul are represented as very distinct and different. And this representation is agreeable to sound reason and philosophy. The body is material, but the soul is immaterial or spiritual. The qualities of matter are divisibility, extension, figure, motion, attraction and repulsion. But the qualities of spirit are invisibility, sensation, perception, reason, conscience and volition. The qualities of spirit cannot be made material, nor the qualities of matter made spiritual. The body of man may exist without the soul, and the soul of man may exist without the body. Hence the soul may be separated from the body at death, and exist in a state of sensibility and activity, while the body crumbles to its original dust. Elijah cried unto the Lord for the widow's son that was dead, and said, "O Lord my God, I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." Christ reunited the soul of Lazarus with his body, after it had lain four days corrupting in the grave. In a resurrection from the dead there is no new soul created, but only the soul that had been separated from the body reunited to it. At death, the soul is separated from the body, and not destroyed. Hence Solomon asks, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" that is, at death. Now, since the scripture represents the soul as distinct and different from it, as separated from it at death, and as capable of existing in a state of separation, there is good reason to suppose that it does survive the body, and exist in its full vigor, activity and sensibility in another world. In this belief we shall be farther confirmed if we consider,

2. That the death of the body has no tendency to destroy the life of the soul. This is a plain inference from the foregoing particular. Since the soul is distinct from the body, and

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entirely different from it in all its essential qualities, it naturally follows that the death of the body has no tendency to destroy its existence, or to prevent its living and acting in a future state. Death can do no more than dissolve its present connection with the body. The body, therefore, may be destroyed without killing or hurting the soul. So our Saviour assured his disciples for their comfort, when he sent them forth to preach the gospel in the face of a frowning and malignant world. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." This Christ afterwards found to be true in respect to himself and those who were crucified with him. The wicked hands which put him to death, and separated his soul from his body for a while, could not destroy his soul; and the same wicked hands which put the malefactors to death could not destroy their souls, or throw them into a state of insensibility. Though death appears to destroy all sensibility and activity, yet this affords no argument against the sensibility and activity of the soul after it leaves the body; for the appearance would be entirely the same, whether the soul did or did not exist after its separation from the body. The soul, we have before observed, is in its very nature invisible. We do not see it before death, and it is not to be expected that we should see it after death, whether it exists or not. Whatever effects death may have upon both the soul and the body, it is not to be supposed that we should see any but those upon the body. These we do see. We do see that death deprives the body of all sensibility, motion and activity, and gradually reduces it to the dust. But this gives us no ground to argue that it produces the same or similar effects upon the soul. We know that while the body and soul are united, they mutually affect each other. Debility of body will produce debility of mind, and anxiety of mind will debilitate the body. Some disorders of the body will change the mind, and prevent the proper exercise of the rational powers; but we cannot argue from this, that the death of the body can bring on the death of the soul. For we find that some mortal disorders leave the soul in the full and vigorous exercise of all its rational faculties, until the very moment before it leaves the body and the person dies. This is a very strong, presumptive evidence that it does not, in any case, tend to destroy the soul. Neither reason nor scripture affords the least evidence that death has the least tendency to destroy the soul. And if it does not destroy the soul, there is no ground to imagine, as many do, that it throws it into a state of sleep or insensibility till the resurrection of the body. We have a good right to believe, notwithstanding all mere appearances to

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the contrary, that the souls of saints and of all other men survive the body after death. It may be proper to observe still farther, to fortify what has been said under this head,

3. That death has no more tendency to obstruct the free, voluntary, rational exercise of the soul, than to destroy it. It has just been observed, that death has no tendency to put a period to the existence of the soul, by dissolving its connection with the body; and if this be true, it is easy to see that death cannot unfit the soul for the exercise of perception, reason, conscience, or volition, after it leaves the body; because the very essence of the soul consists in perception, sensibility, activity and volition. I know it is generally supposed that the soul itself is distinct from all its perceptions, sensibility and exercises. But it seems impossible to form an idea of the soul without perception, sensibility and activity. A soul devoid of all such exercises, cannot be distinguished from a mere senseless and lifeless body. Or, in other words, we can no more conceive of a soul without thought, than of a body without shape or form. If the soul exists at all after death, it must necessarily exist with all its essential properties of thought, perception, sensibility, volition and activity. I know it has been a question whether the soul ever sleeps in this life; but there seems to be no ground for the question. The only argument in favor of its sleeping is, that we do not always remember our thoughts while the body sleeps; but it is equally true that we do sometimes remember the thoughts and even reasonings of the soul while the body is asleep; and this is a much stronger evidence that the soul is always awake and thinks, than our not remembering, sometimes, that it is awake and thinks, is an evidence that it sometimes sleeps. The truth is, the soul is always awake and thinks, as long as it exists in this or in any other world. Its thinking powers and faculties cannot be destroyed, without destroying its existence. If then the soul is distinct from the body, as has been shown, and if death cannot destroy its existence, as has been shown, we may confidently believe that death does not, and cannot destroy its essential powers of perceiving, thinking, reasoning and acting, after it is dislodged from the body. I now proceed to show,

II. That the souls of saints after death go immediately to heaven. For,

1. They are essentially prepared to go there. They were renewed and sanctified before they left their bodies, and they still retain all their natural and moral powers, and all their holy and virtuous affections. They have been made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Their hearts have been formed after God's own heart, and they have become

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holy as God is holy, and pure as God is pure, and perfect as God is perfect. They have loved God supremely, they have repented of sin sincerely, and they have been united to Christ by a living faith. Though heaven is holy, and its inhabitants are holy, and all its employments and enjoyments are holy, yet the souls of saints as soon as they leave the body are prepared to go to that holy place, and join with its holy inhabitants in all their holy employments and enjoyments. The soul of Christ, as soon as it left the body, was certainly fit to go to heaven; and the soul of the penitent malefactor was also prepared to go to heaven with him. Though he had just been renewed, and was very imperfectly sanctified before his death, yet, like all other imperfect christians, he was essentially prepared to go directly to heaven. Paul acknowledged that he had not attained, and did not expect to attain sinless perfection in this life. The best of christians are imperfectly holy as long as they live. But God can and does remove all their moral imperfection as soon as they leave this world, and before they enter into heaven, where no moral imperfection is allowed to exist. As God instantaneously changed their hearts from sin to holiness, so he can instantaneously change their hearts from sin to sinless perfection. That is, he can produce holy, and none but holy affections in their hearts, which will instantaneously prepare them for the holiness and happiness of heaven. God made the penitent malefactor holy just before he died, and we have reason to believe that he has made many others holy a few weeks, or a few days, or a few hours, or perhaps a few moments, before they died. Such persons had no time to grow in knowledge and grace, like long lived christians. But God could prepare them instantaneously to go to heaven as free from all sin as the most eminent saints, who had not attained to sinless perfection before death. I wish to be clearly understood on this point, because ignorance of it has led, and is still leading thousands into gross errors and delusions. The truth is, every renewed soul after it leaves the body, is fit to go directly to heaven; for from the moment it leaves the body, it ceases from sinning, and never after has any other than holy exercises. We have reason to believe that the soul of every saint as soon as it leaves the body, is as fit to go directly to heaven, as the soul of the penitent malefactor was, or as the soul of Enoch or Elijah.

2. The scripture gives no account of any other place than heaven or hell, to which the souls of men go after death. We know that the souls of the wicked are prepared, both before and after death, to go to hell. Their hearts are full of evil, and fully set in them to do evil. They have the spirit of the first

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and greatest enemy of God before they die, and they have the same spirit after death; so that they are prepared to go directly to the spirits in prison. God threatens to turn the wicked into hell, and we know that he has turned some of the wicked into that place of torment. Judas went to his own place when he died. The rich man as soon as he died, lifted up his eyes in hell. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were sent directly to hell, where they are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. But if the wicked go directly to their own place after death, it is reasonable to suppose that the righteous go to their own place when they die; and their place is not hell, and therefore it must be heaven; for there are but two places to which departed spirits go after they leave the world. Real saints desire and expect to go to heaven as soon as they die. David prayed that his soul might not be gathered with sinners, and he was confident that he should go directly to heaven when he died. He said, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Solomon says, "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." Paul assures christians, that death is theirs; that is, it will immediately convey them to heaven. And he declares that he and other christians expected, that as soon as they left the body, they should go directly into the presence of Christ. "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are *absent* from the Lord. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be *absent* from the body, and to be *present* with the Lord." And with respect to himself, in particular, he says, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." This desire which Paul had of leaving the world, plainly implies that he expected his soul would exist after death, and go directly to heaven. If the souls of saints do really exist after death, they must go somewhere, and there is no other place proper for them to go to but heaven, for which they are prepared.

I may add,

3. That the scripture assures us that many saints have actually gone to heaven immediately after they left this world. Enoch and Elijah were translated alive to heaven. Though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob died, yet Christ said they were yet alive in heaven. Lazarus when he died was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom in heaven. Stephen in his dying moments called upon God and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

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Christ undoubtedly heard his prayer, and as soon as his soul was absent from the body, it was present with the Lord. John says, he saw in a vision those who had come out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and they were before the throne of God, and served him day and night in his temple. These persons undoubtedly went directly to heaven, as soon as their souls were dislodged from their bodies. Again, we read of those who have "come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." There is abundant evidence from scripture, that the souls of all the saints, who have ever lived and died in this world, are now in heaven, and actually inheriting the promises. I know that some suppose that only the souls of martyrs are there; but there is no ground for this distinction among the souls of departed saints. If any of them have gone to heaven, we may justly conclude that they have all gone to the spirits of just men made perfect. And since the souls of all good men survive the death of the body, and are really fit for heaven, and for no other place, we must believe what the whole current of scripture teaches on this subject, that they all will hereafter, as they have done heretofore, go directly to heaven as soon as they leave this world. As God only knows the state of departed spirits, we ought to believe what he has told us concerning them, notwithstanding any reasonings or visible appearances to the contrary.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. This subject teaches the error of those, who hold that the souls of all men are annihilated at death. This is the opinion of some deists, who deny that the scriptures were divinely inspired, and that there is any future state of existence beyond the grave. These are called mortal deists, in distinction from those who only deny the divine inspiration and authority of the scriptures, but profess to believe natural religion and a future state of rewards and punishments. The deists in France have been, and are probably now, mortal deists, and maintain that death is an eternal sleep, or puts a final period to the existence of the soul. Some universalists maintain that all good men will be saved and go to heaven; but all the finally wicked and impenitent will at death, be for ever annihilated, or struck out of existence. Mr. Elias Smith, not long ago, wrote a whole volume, to prove the eternal annihilation of all the finally impenitent. And some learned divines before had published

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the same opinion. But materialists, such as Dr. Priestly, maintain only a temporary annihilation of the soul, from death to the general resurrection of the body. As they suppose the soul is material as well as the body, so they suppose the soul dies with the body and becomes extinct, and will not exist again until the body is raised and re-organized, and then it will become a living man and moral agent. But if what has been said be true, then all these different notions of the eternal, and even temporary annihilation of the soul at death, are entirely unscriptural and absurd. We know, if the Bible be true, that many souls of both good and bad men have survived their bodies, and gone into a future state of happiness, or misery. Judas, the son of perdition, has gone to his own place; and the men of Sodom and Gomorrah are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, where Dives lifted up his eyes in torment. The souls of the wicked are not, therefore, eternally annihilated at death. And it is equally certain, that neither the souls of good nor bad men suffer a temporary annihilation, from the time of their leaving the body to the time of the resurrection at the last day. For it is plainly asserted in the word of God, who knows the truth of fact in this case, that the souls of both departed saints and sinners are now alive, and in a state of endless happiness or misery.

2. This subject teaches the error of those who maintain that the souls of men sleep, during the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. This was the opinion of Mr. Locke, of Bishop Law, and of other great and learned divines. These divines suppose the soul may exist after death, without having any perception, sensibility, reason, or activity; and lie in a dormant state, from the time it leaves the body until the general resurrection and day of judgment. But this opinion is contrary to what has been said of the nature of the soul, which is all perception, sensibility and activity, and incapable of sleeping. It is indeed strange that Mr. Locke should suppose the soul sometimes sleeps in the body; but stranger still, that he should suppose that it continues sleeping from death till the resurrection. This, however, was his opinion, and is still the opinion of many others, but without any foundation in scripture or reason. It is true, death appears like sleep; and inspired writers often speak of death under the metaphor of sleep. It is said of David, of Stephen, and of others, when they died, that they fell asleep; and Solomon says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." These and all other passages of scripture, which speak of death as throwing the soul into a state of sleep, in-

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sensibility and inactivity, are to be understood figuratively, as describing only the visible appearances and effects of death, in respect to the body, in this world. It is absurd, therefore, to interpret them literally, as contradicting the plainest declarations of scripture, respecting the happy and miserable state of saints and sinners, as soon as they leave the world. But those who hold that the soul sleeps after death, do press all such metaphorical expressions into their service, contrary to the fairest rules of interpreting scripture and the plainest facts. But supposing the souls of saints were naturally capable of sleeping, yet we cannot reasonably think that God would suffer them to sleep six or seven thousand years, and deprive them of all the happiness they could enjoy, and himself of all the service they could do, in promoting his glory and the good of the universe, for so long a period. The opinion that the souls of men are thrown into profound sleep and insensibility, through the whole intermediate state from death to the resurrection, is a most absurd, irrational, unscriptural and delusive error. It takes away the dread of death from the wicked, and the hope of death from the righteous. It is a sleepy, benumbing doctrine. The wicked would be willing to go to sleep at death, and sleep for ever. And though Paul was not willing to go to sleep at death, and remain absent from the Lord till the resurrection, yet other christians, less pious and more sleepy, are in danger of embracing the delusive opinion, for the sake of present ease and worldly happiness.

3. This subject teaches the enormous error of those, who maintain that many of the souls of saints are at their death sent immediately to purgatory, and there confined for a longer or shorter time, before they are allowed to go to heaven. This is the most universal error that has ever prevailed, and does still prevail, in the Christian world. It is an error universally embraced by the Roman Catholic church, who claim to be the oldest, purest, and most infallibly orthodox church now on earth. It has been, and perhaps is now, the largest church in the world. It has great and numerous branches in Europe, Asia, Africa, South and North America. All these branches acknowledge the Pope of Rome to be their spiritual and infallible head, and submit to his sovereign, arbitrary power in all things of an ecclesiastical nature. This church, which calls itself Christian, and professes to embrace the gospel, maintains as a principal article of faith, that many of the souls of good men are at their death sent immediately to purgatory, to purify and prepare them for final admission to heaven. They suppose that some saints, when their souls leave the body, go directly to heaven, without suffering the pains of purgatory.

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They make a great distinction between some saints and others. They suppose some saints become perfectly, and more than perfectly good in this life; that they do works of supererogation; that they merit the mercy of God for themselves and for others; and that they are completely prepared to go directly to heaven; while those who are less perfect, must go directly to purgatory, and continue there until they are perfectly purified, and prepared for admission among the blessed. This is an error of the first magnitude, and totally absurd and unscriptural. If it were true that some saints are so much more imperfect than others, as they suppose; if it were true, as it undoubtedly is, that all saints are imperfect, and need to be made perfectly holy before they enter into heaven; if it were true that there is such a place of temporary punishment as purgatory; yet it is absurd to suppose that God would send imperfect saints thither, to purge and purify them from their sinful imperfections; because mere punishments or sufferings have no tendency to purify the heart from sin; and because, as we have shown, there is another way of purifying all saints before they enter heaven, by God's producing holy, and only holy affections in their hearts. And the doctrine of purgatory is no less unscriptural than absurd. For the Bible, as has been said, gives no account of any such place as purgatory in a future state, which is different from heaven or hell. But papists suppose that purgatory is a place different from these two places; for they hold that some good men go directly to heaven, where they shall enjoy uninterrupted and eternal felicity; and that all totally wicked men go directly to hell, where they shall suffer uninterrupted and endless misery. It is, therefore, entirely unscriptural to suppose that there is any such place in a future state as the papists mean by purgatory, though what they mean by purgatory seems to be the same as what some universalists mean by hell. They suppose hell is a place of only temporary punishment, which is designed to purify the wicked, and fit them for heaven. They ought, therefore, to call their hell purgatory, because, according to their account of hell, it is just such a place as the papists call purgatory, and designed to answer precisely the same purpose. We must, however, understand papists to mean what they say they mean by purgatory, that is, a place of temporary punishment; and in that respect different from what they call, and the Bible calls hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. So that the scripture gives them no right to believe or teach that there is any such place in the universe as they call purgatory. Besides, their notion of purgatory is altogether unscriptural on another account. According to their notion of it,

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it is properly a place of probation, and so long as the souls of men continue there, they are proper subjects of prayer, and all good men ought to pray for their deliverance, and admission into heaven. The pope, the bishops and priests in the Catholic communion, inculcate this great duty on those whom they view as pious people. Bishop Carroll, when he was in Boston some years ago, publicly prayed for the dead in purgatory. And the Catholics in Boston, in the United States, and in every other quarter of the world, go into the same practice, without any authority from reason or scripture; yea, contrary to scripture; which plainly teaches us that this life is the only state of probation. Dr. Johnson, of England, who was no Roman Catholic, prayed for his wife after she was dead. I have read his prayers for her. And there may be some in New England who believe it is right, and a duty, to pray for the dead. You may think there is no occasion for saying so much on the enormous error of purgatory. But is there not some danger of this and other popish errors spreading in this country, when we know that the late Catholic bishop in Boston was so much caressed by Protestants; and when we know that there are a great many Roman Catholics in New York, Philadelphia, Virginia, and especially in Maryland? They have much more countenance, approbation and indulgence in America, than they have in England, where their abominable principles and practices have produced their dire effects.

4. This subject teaches us the immense value of the human soul. It is distinct from, and superior to, the body, in all its rational powers and faculties, and can exist in its full vigor and activity in a state of separation from the body. It is in its nature immortal, and no other power than that which gave it existence, can destroy it. It can live, and grow, and expand, under all circumstances in which it is placed, and by all objects with which it is surrounded, in any part of the universe. It is capable of making constant and perpetual progress in knowledge and holiness, or in sin and misery. It is capable of going to heaven, as soon as it leaves the body at death, and there enjoying perfect and increasing holiness and happiness for ever; or of going directly to the regions of darkness, and there enduring perfect and increasing misery without end. And God has told us in his word, that he intends that every human soul shall survive the body, and exist for ever in a holy and happy state, or in a sinful and miserable state. How precious is the soul, which Christ came to seek and to save! How precious was the soul of the poor, penitent malefactor, which Christ carried with him to heaven! How precious are the souls of all just men, whom God has made perfect in heaven!

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How valuable was the soul of Judas which he lost! How valuable were the souls of those who are set up as examples, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire! And every person carries about with him a soul, which is more valuable to him than the whole world, and which he will certainly either save, or lose. Let men only realize the nature, the capacity, and the immortality of the soul, and they will be amazed at the existence which God has given them, and commanded them to devote to his service upon pain of his everlasting displeasure.

5. If the soul survives the body, and as soon as it leaves it, goes into a state of everlasting happiness, or misery, then this life is the most important period in human existence. The reason is, men have more to gain, or to lose, in this short and uncertain period, than in any other period of duration. They have all that is desirable in eternity to gain, and all that is dreadful in eternity to lose. Here they may gain the future and eternal happiness of their own souls; or here they may lose future and eternal happiness, and subject themselves to the insupportable weight of divine wrath. Here the terms of life and of death are set before them in the gospel. Here they may seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Here the kingdom of heaven is brought near to them, and they are graciously invited to enter in, and enjoy all the blessings contained in it. Here they are tenderly and solemnly warned against delaying and refusing to accept the offers of mercy, and destroying their own souls for ever. This is the only day of grace and space of repentance they shall ever enjoy. Here in a few years, or in a few months, or in a few weeks, or even in a few hours, they may fix their eternal destiny, and rise to heaven or sink to hell. In the short space of three hours, two immortal souls determined their future and eternal doom. The one loved and adored, the other hated and rejected, the dying Redeemer; the one was conducted to the abodes of the blessed, the other driven to the abodes of the damned. How infinitely precious is the time of life! It is the only accepted time, and day of salvation. Death closes the probationary state, and either opens the gate of heaven, or shuts the door of mercy for ever.

6. If the souls of men survive their bodies, then the office of the ministry is a very serious and responsible office. It is the peculiar and appropriate business of ministers to watch for souls. They are called pastors, to denote their duty of feeding their people with knowledge and understanding. They are called shepherds, to denote their duty of guiding and directing their people in the strait and narrow path to eternal life. And they are called watchmen, to denote their duty of guarding

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and defending them against all their spiritual enemies, who lie in wait to deceive and destroy them. God clearly described the duty of a watchman, in his address to the prophet Ezekiel. "Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If, when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him; but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Thus every minister of the gospel is solemnly bound to watch for souls, as one that must give account. He is accountable for all the souls committed to his watch and care; and if any of them are lost, through his unfaithfulness or neglect, their blood will be required at his hands. Is there any greater trust committed to man, than the trust committed to a minister of the gospel? and who is sufficient for these things? Ministers must preach the truth, and the whole truth. They must inculcate every Christian grace and virtue. They must reprove and condemn every vice and immorality. They must detect every error and delusion; and guard their people against all corrupt and destructive principles and sentiments. A people have a right to expect that the man whom God has appointed, and they have chosen, to be their watchman, should be faithful to God, faithful to them, and faithful to himself; for he watches for their souls, as one that must give account. He has an invaluable object at stake, as well as his people. He has a soul to save, or lose, as well as they; and he cannot save his own soul, unless he seeks to save theirs. Now, my hearers, I ought to recollect, and you ought to recollect, that I have been in my

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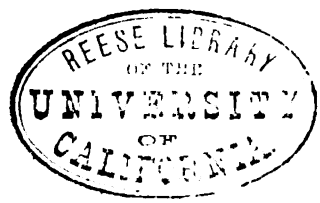
watchtower here, for fifty-one years. In the course of this long period, many souls have been committed to my watch and care; many more than will ever be committed to my trust again. I am still responsible for those who have gone the way of all the earth, though they are now entirely beyond the influence of my preaching and prayers, and the preaching and prayers of any other man on the face of the earth. But I am still in my watchtower, and the solemn and responsible duty of watching for your souls, lies upon me with redoubled weight. The past neglects of duty, and the present decays of nature, and the nearness in which I, and some of you at least, stand to eternity, remind me of my increasing obligations to fidelity. Though you may complain of my past unfaithfulness, surely you cannot reasonably complain of my future watchfulness and fidelity. Methinks I see dangers approaching, and grievous wolves entering in, not sparing the flock. And the danger I see, or think I see, I must warn you of, let it come from what quarter it will. I am responsible for warning, and you are responsible for taking warning. Brethren, the time is short, precious, and important. Death is at the door, and when that comes we must go to our long home, and give up our account with joy or grief.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SERMON LXXXII.

PROCESS OF THE GENERAL JUDGMENT,

IN WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION IS PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. — Matthew, xxv. 31 — 46.

It is the intention of this discourse to explain and confirm the sense of this passage of scripture. And since scripture is the best interpreter of itself, we shall compare the various representations in the text, with the general tenor of the sacred oracles.

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I. Our Lord here gives us a particular and lively representation of the general judgment. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations," &c. This description of the great day resembles that of several other inspired writers. Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all." Solomon says, "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." The apostle Paul declares that "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." We are told that the fallen angels are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment day. And the apostle John beheld in vision this great and glorious and solemn scene. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works." These declarations are too explicit to need any comment; they literally speak the language of the text, and confirm the representation it gives of the general judgment; which is also agreeable to the nature and apprehensions of mankind, as well as the character of the Deity and the present dispensations of divine providence.

It is, in the first place, perfectly consonant to the nature of men as moral agents. They are endued with perception, reason, memory, conscience, and all the powers and faculties which are requisite to moral agency. And being moral agents, they are proper subjects of law and moral government. The Supreme Being, therefore, will treat them but according to their nature in calling them to an account for all the deeds done in the body, and give them a just recompense of reward. Hence every man carries in the very frame and constitution of his nature, an irresistible evidence of a future judgment.

Accordingly, this is agreeable to the natural apprehensions of mankind. As they are sensible they lie open and naked to the view of the omniscient God, so they naturally expect he will call them to an account for all the inward motions and exercises of their hearts, as well as outward actions of their lives. The man who imbrues his hand in the blood of his fellow creature, though concealed from every other eye but the omniscient, has a secret, fearful apprehension of the righteous judgment of God. And, though he is neither accused nor suspected of his crime,

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yet his own conscience binds him over to the judgment of the great day. This is the secret voice of nature, which has discovered itself on many occasions. The barbarians, when they saw the viper on Paul's hand, "said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." The mariners in the ship with Jonah, when they found themselves in danger of perishing by a mighty tempest, "said, Come let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil has come upon us." And when Joseph's brethren were thrust into prison, and subjected to great and unexpected misfortunes, they immediately recollected their cruel and unnatural treatment of their brother, as the procuring cause of their present calamities. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." All men thus feel the natural connection between moral evil and physical, between sinning and suffering, between guilt and punishment. Hence every man's conscience presages a future day of retribution, when he must give an account of himself to God, as the supreme and final Judge.

And this is farther confirmed by the rectitude of the divine character and government. Since the Author of nature is infinitely holy, just and good, he must necessarily conduct agreeably to these divine attributes in the government of moral beings, and dispense rewards and punishments according to their respective characters. The present state of things, however, clearly evinces that the day of retribution is yet to come. Here, as Solomon observes, all things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and the wicked, and no man knoweth either love or hatred, by the present dispensations of divine providence towards him. But as things cannot always continue so under the administrations of a Being of perfect rectitude, so the present state of the world is a clear demonstration of a future general judgment, when the Supreme Being will review the conduct of all his intelligent creatures, and reward the righteous and punish the wicked according to their works.

II. Our Lord speaks of one distinction in the characters of men, which will absorb all other distinctions, and divide the whole world into two classes at the last day. "Before him shall be gathered all nations: And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, &c. — For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stran-

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ger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, &c.—For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not."

In many respects the righteous and the wicked resemble each other. They are often alike as to their natural powers and abilities. In this view, Absalom, Joab and Ahithophel resembled Moses, David and Solomon. There is also a resemblance in their natural tempers and dispositions. Absalom and the young man in the gospel were perhaps in this respect as amiable as Moses, or the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast. These, and many other circumstances which arise from birth, rank, fortune, religious denominations, &c. are common both to the righteous and the wicked, and will not characterize mankind at the last day. But there is a difference in the *hearts* of men, which forms a capital distinction in their characters, and will finally place some on the right, and some on the left hand of their Judge. And this is the distinction which our Lord here mentions and describes. He represents the righteous as possessed of that divine love and charity, by which they sought the glory of God and the good of their fellow creatures in all their actions. But he represents the wicked as actuated by a low, mean, mercenary, contracted disposition, which confined all their views and pursuits to their own good. Both these dispositions are described by the apostle Paul. His description of charity or divine love is in these words. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains; and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." So says our Lord in the text. But the description continues. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, *seeketh not her own*," &c. Whereas the contrary disposition, the apostle says, makes men "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Heat and cold, light and darkness cannot

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be more diametrically opposite in their nature and effects, than these two dispositions are. And since all mankind are governed by one or the other of these two principles of action, so there is an essential distinction in their characters, which justly denominates them all either righteous or wicked. Accordingly we find the scripture every where takes notice of this capital distinction in the characters of men, and marks it by such discriminating epithets as these — the godly and the ungodly — the holy and the unholy — the just and the unjust — saints and sinners — the friends of God and the enemies of God — the children of light and the children of darkness — the children of God and the children of the devil.

As this distinction is of great importance, and closely connected with the subject before us, we shall consider it a little more particularly.

The Supreme Being, in the course of providence, hath acknowledged and paid a visible regard to this distinction between the righteous and the wicked. In describing the character of Noah, he represents him as essentially different from the rest of mankind at that day. "God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth: And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." Here God distinguished the righteous from the wicked, and, to exhibit a public and visible regard to this distinction, he saved the righteous and destroyed the wicked.

He likewise asserted and vindicated the distinguishing character of Job. "The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" The great accuser of the brethren disputed the truth of this divine declaration. "Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands; and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." As if he had said, There is nothing singular in the character of Job. He conducts no otherwise than any other person would in the same situation. Let any other man receive equal tokens of thy love and favor, and he will make equal returns of gratitude and obedience. Sinners love those that love them. He is, like all other men, entirely governed by mercenary motives. Therefore only touch his interest, and strip him of those peculiar favors thou hast lavished upon him,

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and he will drop the mask, discover his hypocrisy, and curse thee to thy face. To wipe off these aspersions from Job's character, and to convince Satan that he acted from truly noble, disinterested motives, God gives him leave to try him with any afflictions or calamities short of death. Satan with pleasure makes the experiment. He brings a train of evils upon Job in thick succession. He strips him of his wealth. He slays his servants. And to close the scene, he rends from his heart the dear objects of his affections, in the sudden and surprising death of his children. Thus he tumbles him, in a moment, from the summit of human glory into the depths of human wo. Here is a fair trial. And what is the effect? Does he curse God as Satan predicted, and as an unholy, unsubmissive heart would naturally prompt him to do under such a severe, corrective stroke? Nothing more remote. "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Here is, as far as can be, a visible demonstration of the essential difference between nature and grace, between a saint and a sinner.

On another very memorable occasion, God explicitly acknowledged the reality and importance of this distinction. He had resolved to destroy Sodom. But previously to the execution of this design, he revealed his purpose to Abraham, who immediately breaks forth into the most fervent intercession for those miserable objects. And this is the language in which he addresses the Most High. "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" God graciously replies to this and his repeated importunity, that if he found fifty, or forty-five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or even ten righteous persons in the city, he would spare the whole place for their sakes. And when neither of these numbers could be found, he delivered just Lot, as a standing monument that the Judge of all the earth would do right. Such are the public, visible, striking testimonies, which God himself hath borne to the distinction between the righteous and the wicked.

David mentions and describes this distinction in almost every Psalm. It may suffice to quote the first, as a specimen of the rest. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the

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Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so; but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;—but the way of the ungodly shall perish." If it be said this Psalm refers to Christ, it is sufficient to observe, that there is no evidence of it from any description of his person or character, nor from any part of it being applied to him in the New Testament.

The book of Proverbs is, in a manner, one continued contrast between the righteous and the wicked.

The declarations of Christ on this head, deserve special attention and regard. His sermon on the mount contains a beautiful description of the discriminating characters of the righteous. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." That Christ here intends to distinguish saints from sinners, in respect to the inward motions and affections of their hearts, is not only evident from the description itself, but from the observation which he immediately subjoins. "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And in the conclusion of this chapter, he more particularly describes the nature and essence of the distinction which he had before been speaking of. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy; But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only; what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Our Lord here represents the children of God as bearing his divine image, and possessing his divine spirit, which distinguishes them from the rest of mankind, who are utterly destitute of such a holy and

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heavenly temper. And in his conference with Nicodemus, he points out the source from whence they derive this special grace, and who it is that makes them to differ. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit; marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

We have only to add the testimonies of the apostles to this important distinction. St. Paul declares, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Again, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And he represents saints as distinguished not only from sinners, but from themselves whilst in a state of nature, by the special influence of the divine Spirit. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind: and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." And in another place, after mentioning a catalogue of the blackest characters, he reminds the saints: "such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The apostle John, in the first chapter of his gospel, says, "As many as received Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And in the third chapter of his first epistle, he insists on the same distinction as a matter of high importance. "Little children, let no man deceive you," (by pretending there is no difference between saints and sinners, for) "he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he," that is Christ, "is righteous; he that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." Thus the essential distinction between the righteous and the wicked appears to be perfectly consonant to the whole tenor of the sacred oracles.

III. Christ farther asserts, that the righteous and the wicked shall be separated from each other, and respectively rewarded

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and punished at the last day. "And he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This representation of the process of the last day falls in with the natural apprehensions of mankind. They naturally expect a future judgment, and they as naturally expect that the judgment of God will be according to truth, and proceed upon the immutable principles of perfect rectitude.

And we have sufficient grounds to expect this, from many instances of the divine conduct. God separated the fallen angels from the rest of the heavenly hosts, and doomed them to a state of darkness and despair. He approved and preserved Noah, whilst he condemned and destroyed the ungodly world. He preserved just Lot from the ruins of Sodom. And he distinguished Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua from that evil generation, who were doomed to fall in the wilderness. These instances presage a more general and perfect display of retributive justice at the last day. And in this light they are considered and improved by the inspired writers of the New Testament. The apostle Peter urges them as incontestible proofs of future rewards and punishments. "For," says he, "if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." And the apostle Paul reasons in the same manner upon the divine conduct towards the devoted Israelites. "But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now all these things happened unto them *for ensamples;* and they are written *for our admonition*, upon whom the ends of the world are come." These instances leave us no room to doubt, that God will finally dispense rewards and punishments to all mankind with perfect rectitude and impartiality.

Nor is this less evident from the whole tenor and spirit of the

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gospel, which sets the rewards of the righteous and punishments of the wicked after death, in the clearest and strongest light. The gospel not only proclaims divine mercy to all penitent and believing sinners, but on the contrary, denounces inevitable destruction to all who finally reject the offers of life. Accordingly our Lord, when he sent forth his apostles to preach the gospel, gave them special charge to proclaim its solemn sanctions as well as its gracious proposals. "And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two." "And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet, for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." After Christ's resurrection, and just before his ascension into heaven, he gave a commission to his apostles and to all their successors in the ministry, to preach the gospel wherever divine providence should call them. And their commission runs in this solemn form. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Here is the very genius and spirit of that gospel, which is to be unfolded and inculcated by all the ministers of Christ in every age of the church. And according to this summary of the gospel, future rewards and punishments appear to be not only consistent with the gospel, but an essential part of it. Indeed the gospel gives as full assurance of the destruction of unbelievers, as of the salvation of believers; and as infallibly fixes the certainty of future punishments, as of future rewards.

This truth evidently runs through the whole frame and contexture of the gospel, and is interwoven with all its peculiar leading sentiments. We might illustrate this in the doctrine of election, divine sovereignty, regeneration, &c. But we shall only mention the terms of salvation, which are the cardinal precepts of the gospel. Repentance is one of these. It is much insisted on both in the Old Testament and the New. Solomon says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." David tells us, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Christ also declares, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And he expressly told sinners on a certain occasion, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Faith in the Mediator is a term of the divine acceptance. "He that believ-

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eth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Love to Christ is a condition of divine approbation at the last day. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathama maranatha:" That is to say, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh to judgment. A forgiving spirit is likewise necessary in order to obtain divine forgiveness. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also, which is in heaven, may forgive your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." And it is equally necessary to persevere in all Christian graces and duties, in order to receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. "Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." These terms of salvation speak for themselves. If they have any meaning, they must mean that those who comply with them shall be saved, but those who reject them shall be lost.

The doctrine of future rewards and punishments may receive additional proof from many express declarations of scripture. To recite every passage in favor of this truth, would be to transcribe a great part of the Bible. We shall therefore only mention a few which are the most plain and pertinent to our subject. We read in the ninth Psalm, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." There was a set of men in the days of Malachi, who ridiculed all experimental religion and vital piety. They said it was a vain thing to serve God, to walk mournfully before him, or to keep his ordinances. They called the proud happy, and applauded the workers of iniquity. In contrast with such persons, the prophet paints the characters and future prospects of the righteous in the most lively colors. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord and thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

The apostle Paul speaks equally plain and determinate on this head, in the second chapter of Romans. "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, against them that commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things and doest the same, that

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thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every *soul* of man" (not sin of man, but soul of man) "that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

To these may be added the declarations of Christ. "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

To enforce these solemn warnings, our compassionate Redeemer, as it were, sets before our eyes the certainty and danger of future punishments, by a number of well chosen and striking parables. To this end he spoke the parable of the vineyard, of the sower, of the rich fool, of the marriage supper, of the ten virgins, of the talents, of the tares, and of the rich man and Lazarus. Each of these parables would greatly serve to illustrate the subject before us, but especially the two last; which, therefore, we beg leave to recite at large. The parable of the tares is in the thirteenth of Matthew. "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather

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up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but Gather the wheat into my barn." Our Lord's exposition of his own parable supersedes any other comment. It is this. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them" (not their sins, but them personally) "into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in the sixteenth of Luke, gives us a still more visible and affecting representation of the miseries of the damned. "There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores; and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto them, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither

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will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Nothing, short of dreadful experience, can give us clearer evidence of future torments than this parable; nor afford a better comment upon our Lord's representation of the final separation between the righteous and the wicked, and their respective rewards and punishments at the last day.

There is one thing more contained in the text, which deserves particular notice, and that is,

IV. The endless duration of future rewards and punishments. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." This is the general voice of scripture. The prophet Daniel says, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The apostle Paul asserts that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." In Rev. xx. 3, the apostle John tells us, that he saw Satan cast into "the *bottomless* pit." This epithet, which we meet with no less than six times besides in this book, expresses in the strongest manner the never ending miseries of the wicked, the smoke of whose torments is repeatedly said to ascend for ever and ever. Our Lord once before asserted the eternity of future punishments as clearly as he does in the text. "If thy hand offend thee cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." In this last passage the eternity of hell torments is expressed in terms which admit of no evasion. Our Lord's argument here turns upon the infinite disparity between temporal and eternal pains. Duration is the only point to be illustrated. And finite, is here set in contrast with infinite duration. And this infinite duration is expressed by a variety

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of epithets, which are, of all others, the most plain, determinate and unexceptionable.

As to the words *eternal, everlasting, for ever and ever*, they generally signify a duration which is absolutely boundless; and are to be taken so here, unless there be some special reason for restricting them to a limited duration. When they are applied to subjects which are in their own nature temporary, this naturally leads us to understand them in a limited and restricted sense. But when they are applied to the souls of men which are immortal, the subject allows us to interpret them in their most common and extensive meaning. The souls of the wicked may exist as long as the souls of the righteous, and therefore the miseries of the former may run parallel with the happiness of the latter. And this is asserted in the text. The same word in the original is used to express the duration of future punishments, which is used to express the duration of future rewards. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." The Greek word here rendered eternal and everlasting, is rendered so fifty-seven times in the New Testament; and there are but two places in the New Testament, where the word eternal, or everlasting, comes from any other Greek word. The same Greek word is likewise used, both in the Old and New Testament, to signify the eternity of the divine existence.* And the Earl of Nottingham hath shown that this Greek word signifies eternity in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, and the best Greek authors, and that they have no better word in their language, by which to express a proper eternity or endless duration.† Indeed, Dr. Hartley, who maintains that the miseries of the damned will finally cease, allows that the scripture expressions concerning the eternity of hell torments are sufficiently plain and determinate, and would establish the point, if any mere expressions could possibly do it; which however he absolutely denies. And though Mr. Seigvolk and others say that the Greek words which the inspired writers here made use of to express the eternity of future punishments, only signify an age, or ages, or ages of ages, or periodical eternities of fifty, one hundred, one thousand, and two thousand years' continuance; yet they do not tell us what other words could have been used, to express an absolute eternity with more certainty and precision, or more to their satisfaction. According to their criticisms, if the in-

* See Gen. xxii. 23. Isaiah, xl. 28; xxvi. 4; lvii. 15. Psalm xli. 13; xc. 2; xciii. 2; cvi. 48. Daniel, xii. 7. Rom. xvi. 26. 1 Tim. i. 17.

† See his criticisms on those words in his answer to Mr. Whiston, ed. 9, pp. 36, 37, 38.

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spired writers had really intended to assert the endless duration of future punishments, they could not have done it; because there is no word in any language which primarily signifies an absolute eternity. But these and all other critics, however, are obliged to own that the inspired writers have used such expressions as sometimes signify eternity; and acknowledge that the sense of such expressions ought to be determined by the nature of the subjects to which they are applied, and the connection in which they are used. Hence there appears no force in the criticisms which have been made upon the words, by which the eternity of future punishments is expressed in the sacred oracles. So far as words or mere expressions can determine the matter, it is absolutely certain that both the misery of the wicked and the happiness of the righteous will run parallel with the interminable ages of eternity.

Nor is there any thing in scripture or reason to take off the force of these expressions, or lead us to imagine that the wicked will ever be released from punishment and restored to the divine favor.

1. We have no reason to think so from the nature of sin. All allow that sin and guilt are inseparably connected, and therefore that every sin deserves some punishment. But many imagine that no transient, momentary act of a finite creature, can contain such malignity and guilt as to deserve an eternal punishment; and therefore that the damned must finally be released from punishment upon the ground of equity, having paid the uttermost farthing which they owed to divine justice. And if their guilt shall ever cease, we may be assured their punishment will also cease, for the judge of all the earth will do right, and punish them no longer than they deserve. But who, in the whole circle of the intelligent creation, can tell us when their guilt or desert of punishment will cease? Sin and guilt are inseparably connected. Guilt can no more be separated from sin, than criminality. There is no sin without criminality, and no criminality without guilt or desert of punishment. Therefore, both the criminality and guilt of a crime must continue as long as the crime continues, or till it ceases to be a crime, and becomes an innocent action. But can murder, for instance, which is a crime in the very nature of things, ever become a virtue? Can time, or obedience, or sufferings, or even a divine declaration, alter its nature, and render it an innocent action? Virtue and vice, sin and holiness, are founded in the nature of things, and so must for ever remain immutable. Hence that which was once virtuous will for ever be virtuous; that which was once vicious, will for ever be vicious; that which was once praiseworthy, will for ever be praiseworthy;

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that which was once blameworthy, will for ever be blameworthy; and that which once deserved punishment, will for ever deserve punishment. Now if neither the nature of sin can be changed, nor the guilt of it taken away, then the damned, who have once deserved punishment, will for ever deserve it, and consequently God may, in point of justice, punish them to all eternity.

2. There is no ground to expect that the punishment of the damned will ever soften and purify their hearts, and so prepare them, in some distant period, to exchange the regions of darkness for the mansions of bliss. Among others, Dr. Hartley and Chevalier Ramsay build their strongest hopes of the final restitution of all lapsed beings to the divine favor, upon this foundation. They imagine that the punishments of the wicked will naturally soften and meliorate their hearts, and finally qualify them for the society and enjoyments of the blessed. They suppose that God's ultimate view in punishing the wicked after death is to reclaim them, and bring them to good. They look upon those persons who die in impenitence and unbelief as peculiarly perverse and obdurate, whom none of the mild methods of providence and grace could effectually subdue and reclaim in this life; and therefore God is reduced to the disagreeable necessity of purging and purifying them, by the harsh and severe means of hell torments. They imagine that God constantly desires, and uniformly pursues the happiness of every individual of the human race, and will bring them all to pure and permanent felicity, as soon as he can possibly do it consistently with their moral freedom, and inveterate habits of sin. And "as God cannot be eternally frustrated in his designs; as finite impotence, folly, and malice cannot for ever surmount infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; as the sacrifice of the Lamb slain cannot be for ever void and of no effect; reprobate souls and angels cannot be for ever unconvertible, nor God unappeasable, nor moral and physical evil undestructible. Wherefore infernal punishments must at last cease, and all lapsed beings be at length pardoned and reëstablished in a permanent state of happiness and glory, never more to fall again. This is the end and consummation of all things, and the design of all God's promises and punishments."

But is there any thing in divine revelation to support this hypothesis? That God visits the righteous, in this life, with pains, trials and afflictions for their spiritual benefit, he hath expressly told us, and they have found to be true by happy experience. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiv-

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eth." "Farthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." And David gratefully acknowledges that he derived real benefit from the divine corrections. "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast corrected me." Thus God lets his children know the salutary nature of his fatherly chastisements. But where do we find the least intimation in scripture, that God intends to punish the wicked in a future state, for their benefit, as he here corrects his children for their spiritual good? Hath he not, on the contrary, expressly assured the wicked that he intends to punish them after death, not to save, but destroy them; not to express his love towards them, but his indignation and wrath? This is the plain import of the sentence to be pronounced upon them at the last day. "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" Here, the wicked after death, are represented as the enemies of God, and as the objects of his wrath; and he is represented as punishing them to reward them for their wickedness, and to express his wrath and displeasure towards them, without the least regard to their amendment and benefit. But if future punishments were intended as fatherly chastisements, to purify the wicked and qualify them for the eternal joys of heaven, why are they then represented as expressive of divine wrath, indignation and vengeance, instead of the tender mercy of God towards his offending but beloved offspring? The truth is, these expressions put it beyond doubt, that God has diametrically opposite ends in chastising the righteous in this life, and in punishing the wicked in the next. And, we may be assured, God can and will make his own means answer his own ends. As he designs that future punishments shall not soften, but harden, shall not save, but destroy the wicked, so they will eventually have this, and no other effect upon them. Accordingly we find this confirmed by the most incontestible evidence. A punishment of near six thousand years' continuance, hath hitherto, in no measure, subdued or softened the heart of Satan, who still

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remains an avowed and malignant enemy to God and man. The signal plagues sent in rapid succession on Pharaoh, instead of softening, hardened his stubborn heart, and made him seven fold more a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction, according to the divine purpose and prediction concerning him. And the tremendous judgments which fell on the subjects of Satan's kingdom, at the pouring out of the sixth vial, had the same hardening effect and impression on their impenitent hearts. "The fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, *and repented not of their deeds.*" Hence we are to conclude that the vials of divine wrath, to be poured on the enemies of Christ at the last day, instead of softening and meliorating their hearts, will only serve to confirm and increase their malignant dispositions, to render them more odious to God, and more unmeet for the society and enjoyments of the blessed. And being thus eternally unqualified for heaven, they will never find admission into those realms of love and unpolluted bliss. Besides,

3. There is no intimation in the word of God, that those who are once separated from the righteous at the last day, shall ever be united to them again. The text and many other passages of scripture clearly ascertain the time, manner, and reason of the separation between the righteous and the wicked; but there is not a text to be found, which intimates when, how, or for what reason, they shall be reunited. Every representation of the general judgment naturally leads us to suppose that God will then finally settle all the affairs of mankind, and irreversibly fix their characters and conditions for eternity. Accordingly none of the most able writers that we have met with, in favor of the final happiness of all lapsed beings, have presumed to tell us when this important event shall take place, or the miseries of the damned shall cease. But if God intended to release them, one would imagine that he would have made it known in his word, and relieved them from that intolerable despair to which they may now be liable for ages of ages. Why should he so particularly fix, and reveal, and describe the day when their punishments shall commence, but never give the least hint concerning the time and circumstances of their release? Is not this bare silence a strong presumption that they shall never be released, and a full demonstration that no man can prove that they ever will?

Now if the above observations have fully established the eternity of future punishments, then we are obliged to believe

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the doctrine, whether we can answer all the objections made against it or not. It would be very absurd for a man to deny his own existence, the existence of his fellow creatures, and the earth's annual productions of herbs, fruits and flowers, because, after all his philosophical researches, he is unable to investigate the mode of the divine operation in creation and providence. And it is equally absurd to disbelieve the being of God, the inspiration of the scriptures, or the eternity of future punishments, because there may be some things connected with these subjects, which lie beyond the sphere of human comprehension. It is not the intention of these observations, however, to preclude an examination of any objections that may be urged against the eternity of hell torments, or any other doctrine of the gospel; or to insinuate that we are bound to believe real contradictions and absurdities; but only to prepare the mind to look at the difficulties which we propose to consider, with candor and impartiality; and to lead us to rest our faith upon the firm foundation of real evidence.

It is said, that "by the separation between the sheep and the goats in the text, is not to be understood a separation between saints and sinners, but only a separation between sin and the sinner. The sins of men shall be separated from their persons, and their persons shall be saved, whilst their sins and the father of them, the devil, shall be destroyed.* This our Lord teacheth in the parable of the tares, and the apostle Paul acknowledged to be true, when he says, speaking of his own evil conduct, 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.'"

In answer to this, it is easy to observe, that though a sinner may become a saint, and a saint may become perfectly holy, or free from all in-dwelling sin and corruption, yet the relation between him and his past sins cannot be dissolved. It will, for instance, for ever remain true, that the apostle Paul persecuted the church of Christ, and that sin will always be his. He hath never sinned since he arrived to heaven, and never will sin again; yet the connection between him and his past sins will for ever remain and be felt, so as to enhance his own happiness, and display the riches of divine grace towards him. The notion therefore that sin can be perfectly disconnected from the sinner, that it can be burned up, destroyed, or annihilated, is a gross absurdity.

Besides, our Lord tells us in plain terms, that by sheep and goats he means all nations. And he uses these metaphors in the same sense in which other inspired writers use them.

* See a late Catechism, which, perhaps injuriously, claims the merit of a female production.

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Sheep signify good men, and goats bad, in many other places of scripture.* But if any one would feel the absurdity of supposing that goats represent sins, let him only read the text according to this construction: Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed sins, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye sins gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye sins gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye sins took me not in; naked, and ye sins clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye sins visited me not. Then shall those sins answer him, saying, &c.

It is objected farther, that "Christ as mediator was so united to mankind, that his actions were theirs, his obedience theirs, and his sufferings theirs, and consequently he hath as fully restored the whole human race to the divine favor, as if they had all obeyed and suffered in their own persons. The divine law now hath no demands upon them, nor condemning power over them. Their salvation solely depends upon their union to Christ, which God constituted and established before the world began. And by virtue of that union, they will all be admitted to heaven at the last day, and not one of Christ's members, not one of Adam's race, will be finally lost." Mr. Relly says,† "Christ having taken on him the seed of Abraham, he in them, and they in him, fulfilled all righteousness, obeyed the law, and underwent the penalty for the past transgression, being thus made perfect in one." "According to this union, or being in him, as branches in the vine, as members in the body, &c., the people are considered together with him through all the circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrection and glory." ‡ "And thus considering the whole law fulfilled in Jesus, its precepts obeyed, its penalties endured, he now inherits the promise. And apprehending ourselves in him, united to him, through all his doings and sufferings, his condition and state is ours. And thus standing in him, we can indeed read the law, or the doctrine of rewards and punishments, without fear; because the punishments, yea all the threatenings of the book of God, have been executed upon us (as sinners and law breakers) in him." §

This is the corner stone, this is the sole foundation which supports the scheme of universal salvation as maintained by Mr. Relly, Mr. Murray, and their followers. If this should give way, their whole fabric falls to the ground, and their hopes perish. We shall therefore consider this point with particular attention.

* John x. 15, 26, 27, 28, 29. Dan. viii. Zach. x. 3.

† Treatise on Union. Boston ed. p. 22. ‡ Page 26. § Page 40.

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To suppose that mankind were "with Christ through all the circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrection and glory," is repugnant to the plainest dictates of common sense. Christ was born of the Virgin Mary; was circumcised the eighth day; was, at thirty years old, baptized of John in Jordan; was, after this, led into the wilderness, where he fasted forty days and forty nights, and baffled all the devices of Satan; and being thus prepared, he went forth preaching the gospel, healing the sick, casting out devils, and raising the dead; till finally, he was betrayed by Judas, condemned by Pilate, crucified between two malefactors, buried by Joseph of Arimathea; and after lying three days and three nights in the grave, he arose from the dead, ascended up into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Were any, much less the whole human race, with Christ in all these circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrection and glory? Where is the man who is conscious of being, acting, and suffering with Christ in any of these extraordinary and stupendous scenes? But had there been such an union between Christ and mankind, that his obedience was theirs, his sufferings theirs, and his glory theirs; they must all, in every age of the world, be conscious of having the same motives, the same affections, the same sorrows, and the same joys, that he had; and of doing the same miraculous actions that he did. But what concord had Christ with Belial? What union of heart with an ungodly world? Was he not pure and harmless, and separate from sinners, through the whole course of his life and conduct upon earth?

It may, perhaps, be said that this is an unfair representation of the matter, and that by "Christ's being in mankind, and they being in him," is only intended, that according to a certain divine constitution, God considers what Christ did and suffered as being done and suffered by mankind personally. The answer to this is obvious. No divine constitution or appointment whatever, could make Christ's personal obedience and sufferings ours. A divine constitution cannot alter the nature of things, nor effect impossibilities. Can we conceive that it is now in the power of the Supreme Being, by a new, positive constitution, to make Christ the betrayer of Judas, the crucifier of his crucifiers, and the perpetrator of all the sin and wickedness of the whole human race? But it is no more impossible for God to do this now, than it was from eternity to make a constitution, by which, not only the actions of Christ and of Judas, but the actions of Christ and of all mankind, should be the same. The supposition of a divine constitution relieves no difficulty here. The notion that all mankind were "with Christ through all the circumstances of his birth, life, death, resurrec-

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tion and glory," is as absurd as the doctrine of transubstantiation, of which no man can form an idea.

And besides all this, it is entirely unscriptural. It is not to be found among the unions which are mentioned in the Bible. We there find, indeed, the union between the human and divine natures in the person of the Mediator. Christ often asserted both his humanity and divinity. He proclaimed himself not only the Son of Man, but the Son of God; and professed to be not only David's Son, but David's Lord. Accordingly, the Jews, who understood the true import of such phrases, considered him as assuming divinity and equality with God the Father; for which they accused him of the crime of blasphemy. And our Lord, to vindicate himself, never denied, but maintained his claim to the last; which claim was founded upon the union between his human and divine nature. Hence the apostle John tells us, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us." And we read, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh." Such a union of the two natures in the person of Christ, was necessary to qualify him for the work of redemption. For the divine nature, separately considered, could neither suffer nor obey; and the human nature, separate from the divine, could not atone by obedience and death; but both these natures, being united in the person of Christ, completely qualified him for the mediatorial work. Besides, this union was also requisite, in order to point out the objects for whom he made atonement. He would appear to die for those in whose nature he died. Had he took upon him the nature of angels, and died in their nature, this would have proclaimed him the Mediator between God and them. But inasmuch as he did not take upon him the nature of angels, but that of the seed of Abraham, this proclaimed him the Mediator between God and man. Now if Mr. Relly had only asserted the necessity of such a union as this, in order to render the sufferings of Christ in the room of mankind, consistent with the divine attributes, we should have had no disposition to dissent from him. For we grant it would have been inconsistent with the divine truth, justice, mercy, wisdom and love, to have subjected Christ to those sufferings which he endured in the room of sinners, had he not been united to human nature, and so become the Mediator between God and man. But Mr. Relly, overlooking this union between Christ and innocent human nature, maintains that Christ was united to sinful men, and partook of their guilt, and on that account deserved to suffer, in point of justice.* In this view indeed, the sufferings of Christ

* Treatise on Union, pp. 3—6.

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appear perfectly just, but not in the least degree meritorious, for there can be no merit in suffering a just punishment. So that had it been possible for such a union to have existed as Mr. Relly pleads for, it would have defeated the ends of Christ's death, and prevented an atonement for sin.

The scripture likewise mentions a union between Christ and the elect. A certain number of mankind were chosen to salvation from eternity, and given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, as the reward of his sufferings. These are called the *elect*, or the *church*, and often alluded to in scripture, particularly in the following passages. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*; according as he hath chosen us *in him*, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ, before the world began." "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore, which believe, he is precious: But unto them which are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner; and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." These, and many other passages of scripture, speak of the elect, and speak of them as peculiar, and distinct from the rest of mankind. All the world are not the elect; but the elect are those who, from eternity, were chosen out of the world, and who are represented in scripture as entirely distinct from the world. Our Lord hath taken care to fix and determine this matter with great precision. He says in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, "And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect." Here the elect are distinct from the many that were to be deceived. Again, in the fifteenth of John, Christ tells his followers, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: But because ye are not of the world, but I

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have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." In the seventeenth chapter, he hath these expressions: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Now as the elect were chosen to salvation from eternity, in Christ, as the means, and for Christ, as the reward of his sufferings and death; so it may be truly said, that there hath been a certain union, or connections between Christ and the elect from eternity. But besides this, there is another more intimate and vital union between Christ and the elect, which commences in time, but shall endure for ever. For whom God predestinates, them he also calls; and whom he calls, them he also justifies; and whom he justifies, them he also glorifies. Hence, says the apostle, speaking of the success of his labors among the Gentiles, "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." All the elect are brought in this life, by the influences of the divine Spirit, to repentance and faith. And in faith, this vital union to Christ commences. The believer then becomes united to Christ in his affections, views and interests. He loves what Christ loves, and hates what Christ hates. He has the same views of the divine Majesty, of the divine law, of sin, and of himself, that Christ has. And he has a joint interest with Christ in the love of God, in the protection of providence, and in all the blessings which result from the work of redemption. This union is of the same nature with that which subsists between Christ and his Father. Accordingly he prays, in the seventeenth of John, that this union might commence in time, between him and those whom his Father had given him from eternity. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." This union makes the principal figure in the sacred writings, and is oftener alluded to there than any other. It is on account of this union that saints or believers, in distinction from the world, are said to die with Christ; to be crucified with Christ; to be buried with Christ; to be quickened with Christ; to rise with Christ; to live with Christ; to be circumcised with Christ; to be baptized with Christ; to be complete in Christ; to be members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And it is on account of this union, that Christ and the church are so often prefigured and represented by the various metaphors of Adam and Eve; of Adam and his posterity; of the husband and wife; of Aaron and his

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robes; of the vine and its branches; of the head and its members; and of the corner stone and superstructure.

These unions, which we have now mentioned and described, are the only ones respecting Christ and men, that are to be found in the sacred oracles. And these are so far from bearing the least affinity to that union between Christ and all mankind, which Mr Relly pleads for, that they are utterly inconsistent with it, and subversive of it. If these be true, that must be false. And if these be true, then to one or other of them must every passage of scripture, which speaks of men's union to Christ, necessarily refer; and of course, leave Mr. Relly's notion of union as destitute of all support from divine revelation, as from reason and common sense.

But it may be still urged in favor of the universal salvation of mankind, that "Christ tasted death for every man, and made full atonement for the sins of the whole world. And it is preposterous to imagine that any of those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, should be finally lost." I answer,

First, This objection supposes that God is obliged, in justice, to save all mankind. Therefore,

Secondly, It supposes that mankind stand in no need of divine forgiveness. For, if the price of redemption which Christ hath paid, hath fully discharged the debt which sinners owe to God, then they now owe him nothing; and if they owe him nothing, they have nothing to be forgiven; and therefore can never with propriety use that petition in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Wherefore,

Thirdly, There can be no grace displayed in the salvation of sinners by the gospel. For if they all deserve to be saved, it is an act of justice, but not of grace, for God to save them. Though the apostle indeed tells believers that they are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." But,

Fourthly, This objection is entirely founded in a misapprehension of the nature of Christ's atonement. It was not the intention of Christ, by his obedience and death, to make void the law, to alter the nature of sin, to move God in mercy, or oblige him in justice, to save sinners; for all this was impossible. But his design was, to establish the law, to condemn sin in the flesh, and maintain the dignity of the divine character and government, and thereby open a door for the display of divine mercy and forgiveness towards a perishing world. The death of Christ indeed hath removed all the obstacles which before stood in the way of the exercise of divine mercy; and that is all. God is no more obliged, in point of justice, to save

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sinners, than if Christ had never died and made atonement for sin. If God saves any of the human race now, it is an act of mere grace, and not of justice. Hence the extent of Christ's atonement does not in the least determine whether more or less, whether a part or the whole, of mankind will finally be saved. This can be determined only by the divine declarations, and gracious promises to Christ, which, as we have shown, all concur to reprobate the notion of universal salvation.

It is said by some, that "God being from eternity perfectly and independently blessed, could have no other motive in giving being to his creatures than their good, and of consequence, he must infallibly bring them all, sooner or later, to a state of perfect happiness."

Though this objection is not void of plausibility, yet it seems to carry something in it extremely absurd and dishonorable to the divine Majesty. For the Supreme Being to leave himself entirely out of view in all his works, and to make every thing in the universe solely subservient to the good of the creature, looks like setting the creature above the infinitely great Jehovah. Besides, if the Deity aims solely at the good of the creature, why should not the creature aim solely at his own good, and make his own happiness the sole object of all his desires and pursuits? And why should God blame him, if in the pursuit of this object he casts off fear, restrains prayer, and loves and serves the creature more than the Creator? Moreover, if the Divine Being aims solely at the good of every individual person, why hath he not made every man perfectly happy through every stage and period of his existence? Why hath he made this world an Aceldama, a field of blood, and scene of every evil, where men are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward? Why hath he not rather poured one continued, uninterrupted stream of happiness upon us, as he hath upon the angels above, who have never felt one sinful passion, nor one painful sensation, since their existence? Perhaps it will be here said, that though God aims solely at the good of the intelligent creation in general, yet this does not necessarily imply that he must constantly seek and promote the good of every individual. We grant it, and abide the consequence, which is this: If the good of the intelligent creation in general, may sometimes require God to give up the good of individuals, then it may, for aught we know, require him to give up the good of individuals for ever. If the general good of mankind once required the temporal destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts, who knows but the general good of the whole intelligent creation may also require their eternal destruction? Therefore, allowing that God does, in this sense, aim supremely and solely at the general good of

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the intelligent creation, yet he may nevertheless make myriads and myriads of individuals finally and eternally miserable.

There is, however, no reason to think that God had, from eternity, no other view in all his works of creation and providence, than the general good of the created system. This supposition seems to originate from a false conception of the nature and blessedness of the Divine Being. God is not an infinite Intelligence, who is perfectly destitute of all propensions. He is not, as the Epicureans dream, an infinite Stoic, who is entirely unaffected with, and indifferent to, all created and uncreated objects. But he is a being of infinitely clear views, of infinitely wise designs, and of infinitely strong propensities and affections. And the perfect, undisturbed, eternal gratification of all these, is absolutely essential to his infinite, immutable blessedness. Though God was indeed perfectly blessed from eternity, independently of his creatures, yet not independently of his own views, purposes and affections. Could we only suppose it possible that God's purposes and designs should now be erased from his mind, or that he should now find himself unable to carry them into execution, this would prove an eternal diminution of the divine blessedness. But since known unto God are all his works from the beginning, since they have always stood present to his view, as fully accomplished, they have been an eternal source of ineffable satisfaction, self complacency and delight. Now if God be capable of great and noble designs, if he be capable of great and noble exertions, and capable of taking a true, real, infinite pleasure and delight in all his works, then it is easy to conceive that he might make his own pleasure, his own blessedness or glory, the grand and supreme object in all his works of creation and providence, and have but an inferior and subordinate respect to the good of the creature. Accordingly the scripture represents this as his ultimate and supreme end in the creation of the world. "The Lord hath made all things *for himself;* yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." Prov. xvi. 4. The apostle says, that "of him, and through him, and *to him* are all things." Rom. xi. 36. And it is the general voice of heaven, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and *for thy pleasure* they are and were created." Besides, the whole course of providence from the beginning to this day, clearly demonstrates that God hath sought his own glory supremely, and the good of the creature but subordinately, in all his conduct. He expelled the rebel angels from heaven, destroyed the old world, and burnt up Sodom and Gomorrah, not for their good, but for his own glory. And we know that the perdition of Pharaoh and of Judas was not designed for their good, since Christ

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hath said of the one, that it had been good for him if he had never been born, and God hath told us, he raised up the other, that his name might be declared throughout all the earth. Hence the supreme and ultimate ends of the Deity in the creation of the world, afford no evidence in favor of the universal salvation of the human race. It may be consistent with God's original and eternal designs, for aught we know, to continue the miseries of the damned to all eternity.

We often hear the infinite love and mercy of the Deity pathetically urged, as an irrefragable argument against the eternity of future punishments. It is said, "This doctrine represents the divine benevolence as far below the pity and compassion that are found in the human heart. A parent's love cannot endure the thought that the dear offspring of his own bowels should be made fuel for quenchless flames. And the most malevolent man on earth does not even wish that his worst enemy should lie down in eternal sorrow, and dwell with everlasting burnings. Much less can the kind Parent of the universe, who is good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works, find it in his heart to doom any of the human race to the pains of hell for ever."

This objection appears to be rather an address to the soft and tender passions of human nature, than an appeal to the cool and impartial dictates of right reason. The weaker passions of our animal nature recoil in the view of those acts of public justice, which our reason, our conscience, and our real benevolence approve, and which the divine authority hath absolutely required. But who would hence conclude that our love and compassion transcend the tender mercies of the Deity? Did not Noah preach an hundred and twenty years to a stupid and impenitent world? Did he not offer up strong prayers and cries to the Father of mercies, that he would graciously avert the dire destruction which hung over their guilty heads? And did he not rise in fervor and importunity, as the period of their day of grace and space of repentance drew nigh? How then must he have felt when he stood a spectator of their final doom! Who can describe or conceive the tender emotions of his heart, the painful conflicts and tumults of his breast, when the tremendous scene opened to his view; when he beheld the rains falling, the fountains of the great deep breaking up, and all nature in convulsions; and heard the waves roaring, and a guilty world, day after day, crying and praying, and rending the heavens with their last expiring groans! But shall we imagine that God was equally shocked on this solemn occasion? No. He, (if we may be allowed the comparison) stood like Brutus, with stern justice on his countenance, and beheld

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his beloved but guilty offspring receive the due reward of their deeds.

With what fervent importunity did Abraham beseech the Most High to spare the devoted cities of Sodom and Gomorrah? And next morning, when he repaired to the place where he had stood and prayed before the Lord, and looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and towards all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace; how did it awaken every tender feeling of humanity and benevolence? But who will hence conclude, that the Father of mercies had less love and compassion towards the workmanship of his own hands, than Abraham? Hence nothing but our danger can equal our delusion, if we imagine the Divine Being to be altogether such an one as ourselves, and judge of the divine clemency by our own. What if Noah, what if Lot had done so? What if Noah had said, "I know the world is become universally corrupt. I know the earth is filled with violence. I know God hath told me his patience is limited to one hundred and twenty years. But I know my own heart recoils at the thoughts of their destruction, and it is my sincere desire and prayer to God that they might be saved. And I also know God is infinitely more kind, and gracious, and merciful than I am. I will therefore neglect the ark, and build my house on the sand, and fear no evil." But behold, the floods come, the winds blow, and the storms beat on his house, and it falls, and great is the fall of it! What if Lot had considered the divine threatenings as a mere mockery, like his sons-in-law, would he not have perished with them in the ruins of Sodom? And is it not equally dangerous to reason in the same manner now, against the threatenings of the wrath to come?

But still, says the objector, Is not God a God of love? And is it the nature of love to punish, especially its beloved objects? I answer, Yes; it is the genuine tendency of true love, under certain circumstances, to punish. True love to his child, induces the kind and indulgent parent to use the rod of correction for his good. So says Solomon, "He that spareth the rod, hateth his son, but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes." So, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." "But this reaches not the case," replies the objector. "I can easily conceive that love should punish its beloved object for its good; but will it extend farther? Will it punish more than the benefit of the object punished requires? Will it therefore punish for ever?" No doubt it will, when the good of the object punished is not the end proposed by the punishment. It is not always the intention of punishment to consult the good of the object pun-

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ished. This is never the case with respect to capital punishments in this life. It is love to his country, or a tender regard to the public good, that induces the civil magistrate to condemn the traitor or murderer to a painful and ignominious death. It was love to God that fired the breast of Phineas, when he rushed into the camp of Israel, and slew Zimri and Cosbi. And thus it was considered, approved and rewarded by the God of love. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phineas the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel (while he was zealous for my sake among them) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace," &c. It is love to the objects injured, and not to the objects punished, that dictates the nature, degree and duration of their punishment. Thus it is God's love to himself, to his Son, to his law, and to the general good of the universe, that induces him to punish the wicked after death. And as his infinite love to these objects will eternally remain, so it will induce him to punish the wicked for ever. His love will burn to the lowest hell. Hence we find that the most exemplary acts of divine justice are represented in scripture as the expressions of divine mercy. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." "To him that by wisdom made the heavens; for his mercy endureth for ever." "To him that smote Egypt in their first born; for his mercy endureth for ever: And brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endureth for ever;" "But overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea; for his mercy endureth for ever." "To him that smote great kings; for his mercy endureth for ever: And slew famous kings; for his mercy endureth for ever; Sihon king of the Amorites; for his mercy endureth for ever: And Og the king of Bashan; for his mercy endureth for ever." Here the displays of divine justice are considered as the displays of the same goodness which first gave birth to the creation of the world. But to whom is the display of this justice a mercy? To the wicked? Nay, but to the Israel,—the church of God. Hence the degree and duration of the punishments of the wicked, will always hold proportion to the degree and duration of the divine love to the righteous. Accordingly God represents his punitive justice as the necessary fruit and effect of his infinite goodness and mercy. When Moses requested a special manifestation of his glory, he told him he would cause all his goodness to pass before him. And to do this, he proclaimed himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth—and that will by no means clear the

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guilty." Thus it appears that divine goodness may, and infallibly will punish the wicked for ever, if the good of the universe requires their eternal punishment.

"The punishments of the damned," say some, "must disturb the joys of the blessed. For how can those pure and benevolent spirits behold, without pain, multitudes of their fellow creatures, whom they love as themselves, eternally weltering under the vials of divine wrath."

In answer to this it may be observed,

First, that the punishments of the damned are the displays of divine justice towards them.

Secondly, that they are the displays of divine goodness towards the blessed. Hence,

Thirdly, as displays of divine goodness, the heavenly hosts ought not only to approve of them, but to rejoice in them, and praise God for them. And hence,

Fourthly, The scripture tells us, that the pure spirits above do rejoice in and praise God for the eternal punishments which he inflicts upon his and their enemies. Upon the fall of mystical Babylon, it is said, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation and glory, and power unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

It is said, "If God should save some of mankind and finally punish others, then he would be a respecter of persons."

To this it is sufficient to reply, that divine inspiration assures us that God's rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked, is the very thing which demonstrates him to be no respecter of persons. "But if ye call on the Father, who, without respect to persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." 1 Peter, i. 17. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons." Colossians, iii. 23—25. And the apostle tells the finally impenitent sinner, that "God will render to every man according to his deeds. To them, who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrigh-

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teousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God." Romans, ii. 6—11.

It is farther urged against the eternal punishments of the wicked, that "though God is obliged to fulfil his promises, yet he is not obliged to fulfil his threatenings; and therefore, notwithstanding he has threatened eternal destruction to the finally impenitent, yet we cannot hence absolutely determine that he will make them eternally miserable."

This objection does in a great measure, if not entirely, defeat itself. For it supposes,

First, That God has really threatened eternal destruction to the wicked.

Secondly, It supposes that God may consistently with justice make them eternally miserable.

Thirdly, It supposes that it is utterly impossible for us to know and prove that he will not punish them eternally, because this cannot be known, unless God has promised not to fulfil his threatenings, which is absurd.

Fourthly, It supposes that it is probable that he will punish the wicked for ever. Divine threatenings must, at least, imply that it is in some measure probable that God will fulfil them, or else they imply nothing, have no meaning, and answer no end. And this probability is greatly corroborated by the many instances which the scripture gives us, of God's fulfilling his threatenings. He threatened to destroy the old world, in the space of an hundred and twenty years. And accordingly at the time appointed he destroyed them. He threatened to judge and destroy the Egyptians, after a period of four hundred years. And when the time of the promise and threatening came, he overthrew the Egyptians, and set the seed of Abraham free from the house of bondage. He threatened destruction to the Canaanites, and he destroyed them accordingly. He threatened a seventy years' captivity to his people Israel, and he fulfilled his threatenings. He threatened the total excision of the Jews, their city and temple, and they were cut off at the time predicted. He threatened the ruin of the seven churches of Asia, and his threatenings have long since been fulfilled. He threatened the utter extinction of Babylon and Nineveh, and his threatenings have had a most exact and punctual accomplishment.* These, and many other instances which might be adduced, afford a strong probability and presumption that God will fulfil all his threatenings according to their real nature and import.

* See Newton on the Prophecies.

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Nor does the case of Nineveh, rightly understood, suppose the contrary. God's threatenings against Nineveh were evidently conditional, agreeably to that divine maxim in the eighteenth of Jeremiah. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation — If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." And Jonah and the king of Nineveh evidently understood the threatening with this implied condition; else why did Jonah preach, or the Ninevites fast? Besides,

Fifthly, It is as certain as God can make it, that the threatening in the text will be executed upon all the finally impenitent, because it is of the nature of a prediction, which pledges the divine veracity, as much as a promise. The process of the general judgment is foretold as an event, with all its consequences both to the righteous and the wicked. It is, therefore, just as certain that the wicked will be punished for ever, as that there will be a day of judgment.

Another objection is this. "If sin and misery be not totally abolished, and all mankind finally saved, then Satan will triumph, and Christ will fail of accomplishing one of his principal ends in the work of redemption, which is to bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the works of the devil."

To this it may be replied, in the first place, that merely the abolishing of sin and misery, will not destroy the works of the devil, and bruise the serpent's head. For supposing in any period of eternity, sin and misery should be perfectly abolished, Satan would still have cause to triumph, that he had brought an indelible stain upon the divine character, and done an irreparable injury to his creatures, and so far frustrated the kind and benevolent purposes of the Deity in the work of creation. Unless,

Secondly, All the sin and misery which he had proved the means of introducing into God's world, are turned against him, and made instrumental of bringing more glory to God, and more happiness to the universe, than if they had never existed. When this is done, Satan is effectually conquered, his head is bruised, and his works destroyed. But,

Thirdly, If the sin and misery of ages can be made the means of bringing more glory to God, and more happiness to the universe, than if they had never existed, then the sin and misery of the damned through eternity may prove the means of promoting the same ends for ever. Therefore, in order effectually to destroy the works of the devil, and bruise the serpent's head, it may be absolutely necessary that Satan and multitudes of his followers should be eternally miserable. Accordingly the scripture represents Christ as triumphing over

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Satan, by turning all his schemes and works against him, and finally casting him and his adherents into the bottomless pit, under the wrath of God, and the everlasting contempt of the heavenly world. And thus Christ is exalted, and his enemies are made his footstool.

Having shown that there will be a general judgment; that there is an essential distinction between the righteous and the wicked; that agreeably to this distinction, they will be separated at the last day, and rewarded and punished according to their works; that their respective rewards and punishments will endure for ever; and that there are no solid objections against these solemn and interesting truths; it only remains to conclude this discourse with such reflections as are naturally suggested by the subject.

It is obvious to remark, in the first place, that every scheme of universal salvation is utterly destitute of any foundation in the word of God. The foregoing observations equally strike at the root of this opinion, in whatever shape it appears, or on whatever ground it is built. Various schemes have been adopted to establish the notion of the final restoration and happiness of all lapsed beings. This notion, perhaps, was first conceived in the fertile brain of Origen, who, like other great and aspiring minds, made such gross blunders in speculation, as men of an inferior size are incapable of committing. This opinion of his, transpired with several others equally absurd and romantic. He maintained that "the souls of men do preëxist; that through their fault and negligence they appear here inhabitants of the earth, clothed in terrestrial bodies; that the mystery of the resurrection is this, that we shall be clothed with heavenly or etherial bodies; that after long periods of time the damned shall be delivered from their torments, and try their fortunes again in such regions of the world as their natures fit them for; and that the earth, after her conflagration, shall become habitable again, and be the mansions of men and other animals, and this in eternal vicissitudes."* Such crude and undigested notions were propagated by Origen; which probably would have dropped into oblivion, ages ago, had not the name of their author carried more weight with some, than the strength of his arguments. Out of this rubbish, however, the Romish clergy formed the absurd doctrine of purgatory. And after them, Chevalier Ramsay, Dr. Hartley, and others, have built on the same foundation the doctrine of the final restoration of all lapsed beings to the divine favor.

Others have founded their expectation of the final happiness

* Phœnix, vol. i. page 11.

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of the whole intelligent creation on the infinite goodness and mercy of the Supreme Being. They suppose that the endless misery of the creature cannot be reconciled with the nature of his crime, nor the boundless love and benevolence of the Deity. This scheme hath been generally adopted by deistical writers.

And of late, Mr. Relly hath devised another method of arriving to the same conclusion, and maintained that all men will be saved by virtue of their union to Christ, which God constituted and established from eternity, without any act or exercise of theirs. This is the last improvement upon the doctrine of universal salvation; and is, of all others, the most absurd and repugnant to the genius and spirit of the gospel.

But the notion of universal salvation, in every form of it, is so absurd, that it hath never met with general acceptance among those that have called themselves christians. They have never adopted it as an article in any of their formulas, creeds, or confessions of faith. Even the Romish church have not embraced it. They do not imagine that every sinner will have the benefit of purgatory, but suppose multitudes are so guilty as to be sent directly to hell, and shall there remain for ever. Only a few individuals have believed and propagated this doctrine, in any age of the world, as Dr. Hartley frankly acknowledges. His words are these: "It is farther to be observed, that the fear of death is much increased by the exquisiteness of the punishments threatened in a future state, and by the variety of the emblems, representations, analogies, and evidences, of natural and revealed religion, whereby all the terrors of all other things are transferred upon those punishments; also by that peculiar circumstance of the eternity of them, which seems to have been a general tradition, previous to the appearance of Christianity, amongst both Jews and Pagans, and which has been the doctrine of the Christian world ever since, some very few persons excepted."* This general disbelief of the doctrine of universal salvation bears a very dark aspect upon the truth of it. For had it been true, and plainly revealed in the sacred oracles, it is strange that the Christian world could never yet be brought to embrace it; especially since it is a doctrine so every way adapted to please and gratify all the natural desires of the human heart. The belief of it would not have afforded half the evidence of its truth, as the disbelief of it, for so many ages, affords of its falsehood. There has been every thing to lead mankind to embrace it, and nothing to reject it, had it been true. But on the other hand, there has been every thing to lead mankind to reject, and nothing to embrace the doctrine of eter-

* Observations on Man, vol. i. pp. 467, 468.

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nal punishments, had it been false. Therefore it is next to a miracle, that the Christian world should, for so many ages, embrace the doctrine of eternal punishments, and reject that of universal salvation, had not the doctrine of universal salvation been really false, and that of eternal punishments most evidently true. In no case, perhaps, the general voice of the Christian world ought to have more weight than in this; especially since it so fully concurs with the general voice of scripture. We have seen that all the doctrines, declarations, precepts, promises and threatenings of the gospel, conspire to condemn the notion of universal salvation. Indeed, had the Bible been written on purpose to refute it, we can hardly conceive that it could have contained any thing more plain, full and determinate against it. And Chevalier Ramsay acknowledges, that "St. Jerom, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustin, and St. Cyril of Alexandria, attacked and confuted this opinion, as maintained by Origen, before the fifth general council held at Constantinople."* In short, there is every kind of evidence against it. It stands condemned by scripture, by reason, and by the general voice of mankind for more than a thousand years past.

Secondly, It appears from what hath been said, that this sentiment is not only false, but very dangerous.

If there be an essential difference between saints and sinners; if they shall be separated from each other at the last day, and eternally rewarded and punished according to their works, as we have endeavored to show in the preceding discourse; then the notion of universal salvation, especially as maintained by Mr. Relly and his followers, is fundamentally wrong and absolutely fatal. Their doctrine teaches that holiness and piety are empty names; that faith, love, repentance, humility and submission, are no other than hypocrisy, pride and idolatry; that it is impossible for a man to prevent his salvation by the most irreligious, abandoned, profligate life; that there is no essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that they shall not be separated at the last day, but Cain, Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Judas, Pilate, and all the rest of the impenitent world, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of glory, and no human soul be finally shut out. Such a doctrine as this is replete with infinite mischief. It strikes at the root of all experimental religion. It confounds all notions of virtue and vice. It destroys all distinction of character; it saps the foundation of morality. It takes off every restraint from vice. It opens the flood gates of iniquity. It renders

* Philosophical Principles, vol. ii. page 245, to the end.

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even God, and Christ, and the prophets, and the apostles, the ministers of sin. It speaks peace to the wicked, to whom, saith God, there is no peace. It has indeed every signature of a damnable doctrine. There are many errors, no doubt, in regard to the modes and forms, and some of the doctrines of religion, which, though they cannot abide the clear light of the last great day, will not exclude men from the favor of God, or the kingdom of heaven. But this is a practical error of the first magnitude, which will eventually prove fatal in the day of decision. Our Lord hath so clearly described the process of the final judgment, that we may as certainly know now, that all unregenerate, unholy, impenitent, unclean, impure persons, shall then be condemned, as if we now stood before that awful tribunal, and heard the last decisive sentence pronounced upon them, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Some seem reluctant to pronounce absolutely upon the fatal tendency of this doctrine, and choose only to say, If it be true, we are as safe as those who embrace it. But we ought rather to say, If there be no future judgment, then we are all safe, and not otherwise. Admit a future judgment, and there remains no room for doubt, whether God will make a difference between him that serveth him, and him that serveth him not; between him that sweareth, and him that feareth an oath. Indeed the supposition that no distinction will be made between the righteous and the wicked at the last day, wholly supersedes the necessity, and even the propriety of a general judgment. Why should God appoint a day in which to judge the world in righteousness, if no persons were to be judged, no characters to be examined, and no displays of retributive justice to be made? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Did the human heart naturally prefer light to darkness, and truth to error, it would be sufficient to discover the truth and expose the error, and leave every person to follow the cool dictates of his own understanding. But since the case is quite the reverse, it becomes proper to address the hearts and consciences, the hopes and fears of men, and give divine truths all the advantages which they necessarily derive from the motives of eternity. Hence the apostles addressed mankind on the weighty concerns of the soul, with great solemnity, tenderness and pathos. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's

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stead, be ye reconciled to God." Supported and directed by such examples as these, there needs no apology for addressing those who are particularly concerned in this serious subject, and warning them against the fatal dangers to which they are eminently exposed.

There are many at this day, who are laboring to reason themselves out of the belief of all truth, both human and divine; and boast of arriving to a certainty that all things are uncertain. But it may be questioned whether the human mind, which is formed to see and feel the force of truth, will permit any man to approach nearer to perfect skepticism, than perfect knowledge. By a habit of resisting truth, however, some may have unsettled their minds respecting divine things, at least, and become exposed to embrace error, if any thing, instead of truth in matters of religion. And for this reason they are very liable to fall in with the delusive scheme of universal salvation, which hath a tendency to diffuse some glimmering rays of light in their dark and despairing minds. But let such be entreated to awake from their reveries, and attend to the great realities with which they are surrounded and connected. Eternal rewards and punishments are substantial realities, whether they believe them to be so or not. By shutting their eyes against them, their danger is not in the least diminished, but greatly enhanced. The period is hastening when they must be thoroughly awakened from their delusive dreams. The solemn scenes of the last day will draw the curtain aside, and open upon their astonished minds the great realities which we have described. And these objects, which, at a distance, made Felix and Belshazzar tremble, will equally shock their guilty souls, whenever their presence can no longer be resisted. A realizing sense of guilt, and folly, and the divine wrath, will make any human heart stoop, and fill it with unutterable anguish, horror and despair. O, that they would therefore turn from such gloomy prospects, and attend to those luminous truths, which will pour a flood of light into their ravished minds, and give them that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory!

There is a larger number than these, perhaps, who are making swift and bold advances in the cause of infidelity, and leave no methods unemployed to discredit divine revelation, and subvert the foundations of Christianity. They need not tell the world their motives. Were they not convinced that the Bible contains the doctrine of eternal punishments, they would not rack their inventions to find arguments to persuade themselves and others that the scriptures are a cunningly devised fable. Let this doctrine be erased from the Bible, and every

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Deist would become its votary, and exchange his Bolingbroke, Voltaire or Chesterfield for that sacred volume. It is this doctrine alone that compels them to renounce a book which bears so many signatures of divinity, and which, they are compelled to acknowledge, contains the most excellent instructions, institutions and commands. But so weak is their infidelity, we presume they would rejoice to find the Bible on their side, to confirm their wavering hopes and feeble prospects of future happiness. And this is what the scheme of universal salvation proposes. It flatters them that the Bible is their friend, and announces eternal felicity to them and to all mankind. Accordly, numbers of a deistical turn have become converts to this agreeable doctrine, and many others are imminently exposed to fall into the fatal snare. But this is flying from the iron weapon and rushing on the bow of steel. For if any discard the Bible because they imagine it does contain the doctrine of eternal punishments, or embrace it because they think it does not, they will infallibly meet with disappointment and ruin in the end. There is one way, and but one, in which they may escape the wrath which is to come, and that is, by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only foundation of hope that God hath provided and revealed; nor can any other foundation be laid, which will not give way when the winds blow and the storms of divine wrath beat upon the guilty soul.

The sons of pleasure, who indulge in every sinful gratification, find it exceedingly difficult, in their serious intervals, to stifle their natural apprehensions of guilt and punishment, and therefore readily catch hold of any thing which promises them impunity in the paths of vice. The doctrine of salvation for all men, without exception, or distinction of characters, perfectly gratifies their hearts, and coincides with their reigning views and pursuits. Accordingly, when this is proposed to their belief, they will, if possible, yield their assent, and shake off those painful fears of the wrath to come, through which they have all their life time been subject to bondage. But let them beware of this slender shelter. It will infallibly deceive and disappoint them. The agreeableness of the doctrine is a strong indication of its repugnancy to the gospel of Christ, which was never relished by persons of an immoral, profligate character. When John preached, Herod was offended. When Christ preached, the whole congregation was filled with wrath. And when Paul preached upon righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the loose and abandoned Felix trembled. And it is the genuine tendency of the doctrines of the gospel to convince profligate sinners that they are in the gall of bitter-

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ness and bonds of iniquity. They may therefore be assured that the soothing doctrine of universal salvation is diametrically opposite to the truth as it is in Jesus. Then let them not listen to the pleasing delusion, and bless themselves, saying, We shall have peace, though we walk in the imagination of our hearts, to add drunkenness to thirst. For the Lord will not spare them, but his anger and his jealousy shall smoke against them, and all the curses that are written in the book of God shall lie upon them for ever. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

There is another class of men whose case borders upon despair, and calls aloud for the prayers and compassion of every pious heart; I mean those who have renounced their former faith, and built all their hopes for eternity upon the slender foundation, that no man can possibly be lost. My friends, are you certain that without love, without faith, without holiness, you can see the Lord? Are you certain, notwithstanding all the divine threatenings, there is no wrath to come? Are you certain that men cannot be under strong delusions to believe a lie, that they may be damned? Are you certain that you can appear before the judgment seat of Christ with safety? Are you certain that there is no meaning in this saying of our compassionate Redeemer: "What is a man profited if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" In a word, are you certain that it is absolutely impossible your precious and immortal souls should be lost for ever? If not, what an amazing risk do you run, to suspend all your eternal interests upon a single point of mere speculation, which stands condemned by the concurrent voice of reason, of conscience, of scripture, and of the Christian world! But (to use nearly the words of an eminently great and pious divine) if you are determined to inquire no farther into the matter now, give me leave, from a sincere concern that you may not heap upon your heads more aggravated ruin, at least to entreat you, that you would be cautious how you expose yourselves to yet greater danger, by what you must yourselves own to be unnecessary — I mean, *attempts to pervert others from believing the truths of the gospel.* Leave them, for God's sake and for your own, in possession of those pleasures, and those hopes, which nothing but the truth as it is

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in Jesus can give them; and act not as if you were solicitous to add to the guilt of an infidel, the ten fold damnation which they who have been the perverters and destroyers of the souls of others must expect to meet, if those divine threatenings which they have so adventurously opposed, should prove, as they certainly will, the most serious, and to them the most dreadful truths. If I cannot prevail here; but the pride of displaying a superiority of understanding should bear on such readers, even in opposition to their own favorite maxims of the innocence of error, and the equality of all religions consistent with social virtue, to do their utmost to trample down the truths of the gospel with contempt; I would however dismiss them with one proposal, which I think the importance of the affair may fully justify. If you have done with your examination into the promises and threatenings of the gospel, and if each of you determine to live and conduct himself as if they were assuredly false, sit down then, and make a memorandum of that determination. "On such a day of such a year, I deliberately resolved, that I would live and die rejecting all experimental religion. This day I determined, not only to renounce all vital piety, but also to make it a serious part of the business of my life, to destroy, as far as I possibly can, all regard to it in the minds of others; in calm, steady defiance of that day when, the followers of Christ say, he shall appear in so much majesty and terror to execute the vengeance threatened to his enemies." Dare you write this, and sign it? I firmly believe that many a man, who would be thought a Universalist, and endeavors to increase the number, would not do it. And if you in particular dare not do it, whence does that small remainder of caution arise? The cause is plain. There is in your conscience some secret apprehension that these opposed, these rejected, these derided truths of the gospel, may after all prove true. And if there be such an apprehension, then let conscience do its office, and convince you of the impious madness of acting as if they were most certainly and demonstrably false. Let it tell you at large, how possible it is that haply you may be found fighting against God; that, bold as you are in defying the terrors of the Lord, you may possibly fall into his hands; may chance to hear that despised sentence, which when you hear it from the mouth of the eternal Judge, you will not be able to despise. I will repeat it again; in spite of all your scorn, you may hear the King say to you, Depart, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

If any thing farther needs to be added, it is by way of direction, how to shun the baneful influence of these dangerous opinions, which it is the business of some, at this day, to propagate with great apparent zeal.

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And here the first thing that occurs is, to search the scriptures, which are the infallible standard of truth and error. We should carry every doctrine which offers itself to our belief, "to the law and to the testimony," and abide that divine decision. The rule is perfect. The only danger lies in the misapplication, which indeed is too often the case. No corrupt principle of a religious nature, hath ever failed to press the Bible into its service, and claim the sanction of divine authority. But though some disjointed sentences in the word of God may seem to countenance the most absurd and licentious opinions, and their votaries may fly to this divine sanctuary for protection, yet the sacred oracles taken in their general connection, fully reprobate every false scheme of religion that ever has been, or ever can be devised. They draw such a character of the Supreme Being, of Jesus Christ, of the Divine Spirit, of the human heart, and of the genuine nature and effects of pure and undefiled religion, that the doctrines according to godliness may be clearly distinguished from all their counterfeits. The scriptures in general have a plain, determinate, consistent meaning, which may be clearly understood. Therefore no two opposite doctrines of religion can both be agreeable to the word of God; but one or the other must necessarily stand condemned by it. Hence, for instance, if the doctrine of eternal punishments be really agreeable to the Bible, as we have endeavored to show, then the doctrine of universal salvation is entirely contrary to it, and not one text that can be found, does, in its true sense, give the least degree of evidence in its favor. This being the case, there is all encouragement to search the scriptures, to see which of these two diametrically opposite doctrines is true. It would be strange indeed if this could not be determined by every honest inquirer. If any are in doubt therefore, we would entreat them to take heed to this sure word of prophecy, which is able to make them wise unto salvation.

In the next place, there is a caution to be used against the seduction of those who propagate corrupt and dangerous sentiments. Be not deceived by their pretensions to superior penetration and knowledge. Men of the strongest minds and most extensive literature have often committed the grossest blunders in their religious speculations, and then employed all their learning and abilities to maintain and propagate them. Some of the enemies of divine revelation, and of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, have displayed shining talents and a profusion of learning in pleading the cause of error, and attempting to shake the pillars of our holy religion. And many of their admirers appear to have been dazzled and allured into their snares by an implicit faith in their great abilities. But this betrays weakness. Great men are not always wise; they are liable to err; and

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therefore we should examine their opinions as well as those of other men, and admit them only upon the ground of real evidence.

Nor are we to be biassed in favor of men's licentious principles, on account of their amiable moral characters. It is a just observation of Dr. Brown, that men of strict morality have often disseminated the most licentious and pernicious doctrines. It is well known that Epicurus, the father of doctrinal licentiousness, never lived up to his principles, but maintained a regular and exemplary life. Spinoza, the father of speculative atheism, was a man of sobriety and apparent devotion. Lord Herbert, who, if not the father, was, yet the principal advocate for deism in the last century, appears to have had a serious mind, and a conscientious regard to duty. And we know that some of the advocates for universal salvation are men of amiable natural dispositions and fair moral characters. But ought we hence to entertain a more favorable regard for atheism, deism, or any other licentious doctrines? By no means. Those principles are still to be shunned, at the peril of our souls.

Nor, again, are we to believe the propagators of error, though they throw out the most pompous and solemn asseverations of their sincerity, impartiality and uncommon intercourse with the Deity, and concern for his glory. Though we scruple not their sincerity, yet we scruple the propriety of throwing out the profession of it, which can have no tendency to enlighten, but only prejudice the minds of the credulous. This, which we venture to call an artifice, is often employed by the advocates for universal salvation. Mr. White, in his treatise on the universal restoration of all sinful creatures to the divine favor, makes the most solemn asseverations of his sincerity and sacred regard for the divine glory. His expressions are these: "And here I do in the fear of God most humbly prostrate myself before his divine Majesty, and in the deepest sense of my own darkness and distance from him, do, with all my might, beg of that infinite goodness I am endeavoring to represent to others, that, if something like this platform and prospect of things be not agreeable to that revealed and natural light he hath given to us, my understanding may be interrupted and my design fall, and that the Lord would pardon my attempt: and I know he will do so, for he hath given me to have no farther concern for this matter, than as I apprehend it to be a most glorious truth, witnessed to, both by the scriptures of truth and by the most essential principles of our own reason, and which will be found at the last opening of the everlasting gospel, to recover in that opening a degenerate world."* Mr. Relly holds out the same

* Pages 6, 7.

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lure to his readers, to place an implicit faith in the rectitude of his views, and the divinity of his doctrines. In a preface to one volume of his writings, he assures his readers that his discourses were delivered extempore, without any previous study or forethought, and flowed from his lips as they were dictated by the divine Spirit. For, says he, I followed that divine direction given to the apostles, "Take no thought before hand, what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." How presumptuous is it for any man, at this day, to pretend to imitate the apostles in this respect, and especially for Mr. Relly, who in his writings every where ridicules all experimental religion, inward piety, holy affections, and Christian graces and tempers!

Error often employs such artifices as truth neither needs nor approves. They sometimes, however, prove successful, and deceive the inattentive and unguarded. Those who use them therefore are dangerous persons, and their corrupting influence is studiously to be avoided. Their doctrines are fatal if imbibed; and even when they are not fully adopted, they tend to harden the heart, and stupify the conscience. The bare thought, that some maintain that all will be saved, begets a secret hope that possibly it may be true, and that there is not so much danger in impenitence and unbelief as many have long imagined and pretended. Therefore, to hear the Universalists preach, or read their writings, merely to know what they can say in defence of their errors, is like Eve's listening to the reasoning of the serpent, and may, in the event, prove equally fatal. Accordingly, the scripture characterizes false teachers, and warns you to avoid them. The apostle Paul, who was troubled with the perverters of the gospel, treats them with great plainness and severity. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." The apostle John directs men to have no intimate connection with false teachers. "If any come unto you and bring not this doctrine, that is, the doctrine of Christ mentioned in the preceding verse, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." And Solomon gives a similar caution and direction. "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err." Thus you have not only the voice of reason, but the voice of God, to warn you to shun the presence and influence of those that lie in wait to deceive.

The last direction is, to repent and believe the gospel. This

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will place you beyond the reach of all fatal errors. When your hearts are established with grace you will no longer be liable to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines. When you yield cordial obedience to the divine will, there is a promise that you shall know of doctrines whether they be of God. When you embrace the gospel from the heart, it will be out of the power of Satan or any of his instruments to deceive you. When you sincerely love God, all things shall work together for your good, and prepare you more and more for the great, and glorious, and solemn scenes, which death, judgment and eternity will soon open to your view. But so long as you remain in a state of impenitence and unbelief, you are in imminent danger of making shipwreck, not only of your faith, but of your precious and immortal souls. Though you should escape every fatal error, and, in speculation, clearly understand every doctrine of the gospel, yet if you hold even the truth in unrighteousness, you will certainly perish. An orthodox creed and a fair external appearance are of no avail, in point of divine acceptance, without a broken and contrite heart, and an unfeigned love of the truth. For, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." And "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Therefore, "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Nor is there the least excuse for a moment's delay. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Life and death are now set before you. This is the only day of grace, and space of repentance you will ever enjoy. You are now placed between two vast eternities of happiness and wo. You are, therefore, of all the creatures of God, in the most critical, serious and solemn situation. Your life, or your death, your happiness, or your misery, for a boundless eternity, is suspended on the slender thread of life. And death is advancing with rapid speed to seal up your account for the judgment of the great day; when, in the view of the assembled universe, you must hear your doom; and either rise with the righteous to mansions of eternal bliss, or sink with the wicked down to regions of eternal darkness, horror and despair. Be entreated then, O sinner, to agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him, lest he deliver thee to the Judge, and the Judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

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SERMON LXXXIII.

THE PLEA OF SINNERS AGAINST ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

PRODUCE your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob. — ISAIAH, xli. 21.

EVER since the first apostacy of mankind, they have been disposed to contend with God, respecting his character, his laws, and government. They have called in question his sovereignty, his justice, and even his goodness. They have complained of the precepts and penalties of his holy and righteous laws. They have arraigned the justice and equity of his government, and said, the ways of the Lord are not equal. But God has always been willing to meet their complaints and settle the controversy between them, upon the most just and solid grounds. By Micah, he challenges them to the contest. "Hear ye now what the Lord saith; Arise, contend before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." By Isaiah, in the text, he calls upon them to reason the case with him fairly. "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob." God seems to take it for granted that those who call in question the excellence of his character, and the rectitude of his laws and government, suppose that they have reasons, and even strong reasons, for their erroneous feelings and opinions. It is true that some who imbibe false and dangerous opinions in religion, choose to con-

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ceal them, for a time at least; but those who avow their errors profess to have, and presume to offer, what they deem strong reasons for their religious errors. Skeptics, Atheists, and Deists, profess to have what they deem strong reasons for their various opinions, and often produce them. Though Universalists formerly chose to confine their peculiar sentiments in their own breasts, yet lately, they are very free to write, to preach, and to publish their errors, and bring forth their strong reasons in support of them. It is, therefore, my present design to meet this class of errorists, and examine the force of their strong reasons, and see whether they are sufficient to support the peculiar doctrine which they build upon them. I propose to examine the five following principles, upon which they argue in favor of their peculiar doctrine.

1. The universal goodness of God.
2. The universal atonement of Christ.
3. The universal offers of salvation.
4. The universal goodness of mankind.
5. Their universal punishment in this life.

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These, I presume they will all allow, are the strongest reasons they have in support of the doctrine of universal salvation, and those upon which they most confidently rely.

1. Let us inquire whether it can be fairly inferred from the universal goodness of God, that he will finally save all men. It is readily granted that the goodness of God extends to all intelligent creatures, and even to all creatures that possess the least sensibility or capacity of enjoying happiness or suffering pain. He is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. His goodness consists in the love of benevolence, and in the love of complacence. His love of benevolence is universal, and extends to all creatures, without any respect to their moral characters. He values the happiness of every individual according to its worth, whether he has a good moral character, or a bad moral character, or no moral character at all. He values the happiness of angels according to its worth, the happiness of mankind according to its worth, the happiness of the spirits in prison according to its worth, and the happiness of all percipient creatures according to its worth. His universal benevolence, therefore, is impartial. He values the happiness of angels more than the happiness of men, the happiness of men more than the happiness of the inferior creation, because angels are more capable of enjoying happiness than men, and men are more capable of enjoying happiness than animals and insects. His universal goodness is also disinterested. He loves all his creatures with benevolence, because he loves happiness simply considered, whether it tends to promote his own

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felicity or not. And since his benevolence is universal, impartial and disinterested, he must love the good of all his creatures more than the good of any individual or any individuals; and consequently must be disposed to give up the good of any individual or individuals, for the sake of promoting the greatest good of the universe. It is the natural tendency of impartial love to treat every object according to its worth. If a rich man sees his house on fire, and values every article in it according to its worth, but cannot save them all, which will he give up, to save the rest? There is no doubt, in this case, but he will give up the lumber and least valuable articles, and pass through one apartment after another, and seize his desk, which contains his silver and gold, and most valuable papers, while he suffers all the other articles to be consumed in the flames. Or if his dearest friends and connections are to be preserved, will he not seek to save these rather than his property? His impartial benevolence, in this situation, would be guided and governed by his wisdom. Apply this to the universal, impartial and disinterested benevolence of the kind Parent of the universe. Must not his universal, impartial and disinterested love to the happiness of all his creatures, lead him to seek the greatest happiness of all, and if necessary for that purpose, to sacrifice the happiness of individuals to the happiness of the whole? And now who dares to say but that God, in his universal goodness guided by his perfect wisdom, did see best to decree before the foundation of the world, that part of the angels should be for ever holy and happy, and part of the angels should be for ever unholy and miserable, and part of mankind should be for ever holy and happy, and part for ever unholy and miserable? And if God did see it to be wisest and best to elect some angels and some men to eternal life, and reprobate some angels and some men to endless death, who will dare to say that it was inconsistent with his universal goodness and wisdom thus to elect and thus to reprobate some angels and some men? There is, therefore, no force at all in the argument drawn from the universal goodness of God, to prove the doctrine of universal salvation. It is just as consistent with the universal benevolence of God, to make men miserable in a future state, as in this present evil world, where he inflicts ten thousand temporal evils and calamities upon them. The Universalists themselves could see no plausibility in their argument drawn from the universal benevolence of God, if they did not, designedly or undesignedly, overlook the distinction between God's love of benevolence and love of complacence. Though God's love of benevolence be universal, yet his love of complacence is not, but is confined to those only who bear his moral image, and pos-

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sess the same benevolent spirit that he possesses. He loves them that love him, with the love of complacence, but hates all those who hate his holy and amiable character. Accordingly, he declares in his word that "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." God always did and always will love Judas with the love of benevolence; but never did, and never will love him with the love of complacence. If the advocates for universal salvation could prove that God loves all his unholy creatures with the love of complacence, they might fairly infer that he will make them all finally and for ever happy; but they have no right to draw this inference from his universal benevolence.

2. Let us inquire whether the universal atonement of Christ affords a solid argument in favor of the universal salvation of mankind. The scripture plainly teaches us, that Christ did die on the cross to make atonement for the sins of the whole world. Christ himself said, he came "to give his life a ransom for many." When John saw Jesus coming to him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Paul said, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all." Again he said, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor; that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man." And the apostle John said, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." These passages of scripture plainly prove, that Christ died in the room of all mankind, and made atonement for every man, without a single exception. He died as much for Judas as for Paul. But we have no right to conclude, because he died to make atonement for all men, that all men will be saved. And the advocates for universal salvation would see, in a moment, that no argument could be fairly drawn from the universal atonement of Christ, in favor of their doctrine, if they would only consider the nature of his atonement. The sins of men were not transferred to him, nor was he punished for their sins. He suffered, indeed, for them; but his sufferings did not pay the debt of suffering which they owed to divine justice. They still deserve to suffer the penalty of that law, which they have transgressed, and which penalty he did not suffer, and which, if he had suffered, would not have taken away their desert of punishment. Sin is not of the nature of a pecuniary debt, which one person can pay for another, by suffering. The

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atonement of Christ did nothing more than display that vindictive justice, which would have been displayed, by executing the penalty of the law upon the transgressors themselves. It did not render them less guilty or less deserving of punishment, nor lay God, in point of justice, under the least obligation to pardon and save them. It only laid a foundation for God to have mercy on whom he would have mercy, and to appear just in pardoning and justifying any penitent, believing, returning sinner. Though Christ died to make atonement for all men, yet he did not die with a design to save all men. Accordingly he said, "I lay down my life for the sheep," that is, for the elect, whom his Father had given him. Christ's universal atonement is perfectly consistent with God's electing love and discriminating grace. It is true, God has bound himself by promise to Christ, to save the elect; but he has not bound himself by promise to save any others of mankind. And it is impossible to prove from the nature and extent of the atonement, that any but the elect will be saved. Let a man only understand the nature and design of Christ's atonement, and he cannot draw the least argument from it, in favor of Chauncey's scheme, or Murray's scheme, or Huntington's scheme, or any other scheme of universal salvation. There would not be the shadow of plausibility in the argument drawn from the atonement of Christ, if his atonement were not considered and represented as paying the debt of suffering in the room of sinners, which is absolutely false and absurd. Even the personal suffering of sinners has no tendency to take away their guilt and desert of punishment. The personal suffering of the fallen angels, for nearly six thousand years, has not taken away any of their guilt or desert of punishment; but they still deserve to be punished, as much as if they never had suffered the least degree of punishment. And if the personal suffering of sinners cannot take away their guilt and desert of punishment, surely the sufferings of Christ, in making atonement, cannot take away their guilt and desert of punishment. So that the universal atonement of Christ does not afford the least argument in favor of the doctrine of universal salvation. Nor,

3. Do the universal offers of pardoning mercy to sinners in the gospel, afford the least argument to prove that they will all be saved. It is readily allowed, that the Bible abounds with such free, rich and universal offers of mercy to sinners. The evangelical prophet cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Christ cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and

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are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And in the parable of the gospel feast, he represents all as invited to come and partake of it. We also read, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." These universal offers of pardoning mercy have some true meaning, and the great question now is, What do they mean? Are they to be understood conditionally or unconditionally? There is a condition to be seen on the very face of them. There is something for men to do on their part, in order to possess the spiritual blessings offered. Men must thirst for the waters of life, and come to them, in order to partake of them; and men must come to Christ, that they may have life, in order to obtain it. Christ says, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Coming to Christ signifies the same as believing in him. All the offers of the gospel are made to some holy exercises of heart; such as holy love, holy repentance, holy faith, holy submission, and all other holy affections. And if men exercise any of these holy affections, they are promised eternal life; but if they refuse to exercise holy affections, they are threatened with eternal death. Christ commanded his apostles, and through them all their successors in the ministry, to preach the gospel in this conditional language: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Repentance and faith are the cardinal conditions, upon which eternal life is promised; and impenitence and unbelief are the cardinal conditions, upon which eternal death is threatened. This is agreeable to the solemn declaration of Christ. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Lest the universal offers of mercy should be misunderstood and perverted, the gospel every where guards them with the solemn conditions of eternal life, or eternal death. Every offer of mercy in the gospel is inseparably connected with the promise of eternal life, upon the condition of accepting the offer, and with the threatening of eternal death, upon the condition of rejecting the offer. Hence the universal offers of pardoning mercy in the gospel afford no argument in favor of universal salvation, but an evidence, next to demonstration, that some men will be damned.

4. Some draw an argument in favor of universal salvation from the universal goodness of mankind. They assert, that there is no such thing as a change of heart, by the renewing and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; and that it is an infallible mark of hypocrisy for one man to think or say, that he

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is any better at heart, than any other. They deny, that there is any essential distinction between saints and sinners in this life. They hold, that all men are partly bad and partly good, and that none are totally depraved. If they can prove this, it is granted that they can fairly infer from it that all men will be saved. For the gospel does certainly promise eternal life to all who truly love God, repent of sin, and believe in Christ, or have the least degree of saving grace. But can they prove, that there is no essential distinction between such true penitents and sincere believers, and the rest of mankind? Can they prove, that total depravity has not reigned in the hearts of all men, naturally, from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, and from Christ to this day? Christ taught the doctrine of total depravity. He said, that sinners have not the love of God in them, and that they have the same selfish and malignant spirit that reigns in the heart of the great adversary. Paul taught, that all men are naturally dead in trespasses and in sins, and that they have a carnal mind, which is enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be; so that they who are in the flesh cannot please God. It is unscriptural and absurd in the highest degree, to pretend to draw an argument in favor of universal salvation, from the false supposition of the universal and equal goodness of mankind.

5. Some argue that all mankind will be saved, because they are all sufficiently punished in this life. This they consider as a very strong reason to prove universal salvation. They affirm that temporal punishment is all that sin deserves. They affirm that there is not a threatening in the Bible, respecting any future and eternal punishment of sinners. But all men of plain common sense, who have read the Bible, and whose understanding has not been darkened by the blindness of the heart, and by the sophistry of seducers, know that God has plainly threatened future and eternal punishment to the finally impenitent and unbelievers. The law threatens eternal death to every impenitent transgressor of it. Christ abundantly taught the doctrine of future and eternal rewards and punishments. He taught this doctrine, when he said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." He taught this doctrine, when he said, "Many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He taught this doctrine in the parable of the tares and the wheat; in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and in the representation of the general judgment in

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the twenty-fifth of Matthew. After such plain and positive declarations and predictions of future and eternal rewards and punishments, none who pay a due regard to the Bible, can believe that all men will be saved. Thus weak, impertinent and absurd, are the supposed strong reasons in favor of universal salvation.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If no arguments can be drawn from the strong reasons, or fundamental principles, upon which the doctrine of universal salvation is founded, in favor of it; then no arguments can be drawn in favor of it, from any passages of scripture, which have been, or can be adduced to support it. All denominations of christians endeavor to read the whole Bible into their scheme of doctrines, and especially the Universalists. They quote and apply a multitude of texts to prove that all men will be saved, and while they explain the passages they cite, according to their own false principles, they carry a great degree of plausibility to many people. But if the passages they adduce be rightly explained according to the first and fundamental doctrines of the gospel, they will appear to have no pertinency or force at all. Let any passage of scripture be explained according to the true meaning of God's universal goodness, as consisting in universal benevolence and limited complacence; or according to the true sense of the universal atonement of Christ; or according to the true sense of the universal offers of mercy to sinners; or according to the true sense of the universal and total depravity of mankind; or according to the true sense of the threatenings denounced against sinners in the gospel; and such a passage rightly explained could not afford the shadow of an argument in favor of universal salvation. And this is true of every passage in the Bible. All the numerous texts that Universalists quote, they explain and apply according to their own false principles; and of course they misapply and pervert every text they adduce in support of their unreasonable and unscriptural sentiments. No doctrine can be proved or refuted, by merely marshalling one class of texts against another, without explaining them according to some sound and acknowledged principle. Texts ought never to be adduced to explain and establish any first principles; but first principles are to be adduced to explain and establish the sense of every text of scripture. It is easy to select particular passages, which, without a true explanation, will appear to support the most absurd doctrine that ever was imbibed and propagated. The plain words of Christ, at the first sacrament, respecting the bread he brake, "This is my body," have been ten thousand times employed to prove the

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doctrine of transubstantiation, or the bodily presence of Christ at his table. But can these words prove the grossest absurdity in nature, that Christ's identical body can be actually present in ten thousand places at once? This is contrary to the reason and common sense of all mankind. It is just as absurd to suppose, that some texts in their true sense prove that all men will be saved; and that other texts in their true sense prove, that some men are now, and others will be, separated from God and all good to all eternity. It is in vain to attempt to refute Universalists by quoting particular texts of scripture, without explanation. The only way to refute them is to refute their strong reasons, or first principles, which they argue from. They can evade any text of scripture, by explaining it according to their false principles. This is their dernier resort, when they meet with any plain scripture in opposition to their favorite doctrine. They deny the force of all texts, which speak of the doctrine of election, the doctrine of reprobation, the doctrine of the general judgment, or of any other doctrine opposite to their own, by saying that all such doctrines are inconsistent with their sense of the universal goodness of God, or the universal atonement of Christ, or the universal goodness of mankind, or their universal punishment in this life. All their plausibility arises from their sophistry, which consists in reasoning right from false principles. That they all mean to reason sophistically I do not believe, nor mean to assert; but I have no hesitation in asserting, that they do reason sophistically, and more sophistically than any other errorists that I am acquainted with. For their doctrine is more palpably and obviously false, than any other doctrine pretended to be found in the Bible.

2. If those who maintain that all men will be saved, have no strong and conclusive reasons to support their opinion, then those who maintain, that only a part of mankind will be saved, have strong and conclusive reasons to support their doctrine. The doctrine that all men will be saved, is directly opposite to the doctrine that only some men will be saved. If the doctrine of universal salvation be false, and founded upon false principles, then the opposite doctrine, that only a part of mankind will be saved, is founded upon true and solid principles. Two directly opposite doctrines cannot both be true, but one must be true, and the other false. It has been made to appear sufficiently plain, perhaps, that no just and conclusive arguments can be drawn, either from reason, or from scripture, to support the doctrine of universal salvation; from which it necessarily follows, that just and conclusive arguments may be drawn from reason and scripture, to support the doctrine that only a part of mankind will be saved. Whatever reason has to say, and scripture has

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to say upon the subject, is in favor of the doctrine of future and eternal rewards and punishments. Reason says, that all impenitent sinners *deserve* eternal punishment, and that it is consistent with God's universal benevolence, to inflict an eternal punishment upon them. Reason says, that there is an essential difference between saints, who possess pure, disinterested benevolence, and sinners, who are wholly under the dominion of perfect selfishness; and that these two classes of men ought to be for ever separated; the benevolent made happy and the malevolent made miserable. Reason says, that no totally depraved sinners will ever choose to become benevolent, without a special divine influence upon their hearts; and that God is under no obligation to grant them such a special divine influence; and consequently that God may, consistently with his universal benevolence, renew one and not another, as an act of absolute sovereignty. And now, all that scripture says respecting these points serves to confirm all the dictates of reason. Every doctrine and every passage of scripture, according to its true sense, either directly or indirectly proves that only a part of mankind will be saved. All reason and all scripture is in favor of those who maintain the doctrine of universal salvation, or in favor of those who maintain the doctrine of limited salvation. But Universalists themselves are sensible that the whole current of scripture is apparently against them, and for this reason they exert all their powers, in conversation, in preaching, and in writing, to explain away the texts, and refute the reasons, which oppose their doctrine. They never lay down principles and explain them, nor construe scripture according to the dictates of reason. But those who hold to a limited salvation lay down principles and explain them. They tell what they mean by God's benevolence, and what they mean by his love of complacence; what they mean by total depravity; what they mean by regeneration; what they mean by election and reprobation; and what they mean by the terms of salvation. And having fixed these great and fundamental principles of the gospel, they can read the whole Bible in support of them, or in consistency with their doctrine of limited salvation. They do not set one text of scripture against another, but explain every text agreeably to the great fundamental principles which they have established and explained. There is no occasion of misconstruing and misapplying any passages of scripture, in order to prove that only a part of mankind will be saved; or in order to refute every argument and every scripture that Universalists can bring to support their unscriptural and absurd sentiments. Their strong reasons, when brought to the test of solid principles, lose all their force, and leave them no infallible rule, by which to

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construe apparently conflicting passages of scripture. But those who maintain that only a part of the human race will finally reach the kingdom of heaven, can easily construe scripture in general in harmony with the doctrine they profess.

3. It appears from what has been said concerning the strong reasons that are brought forth in support of universal salvation, that they destroy one another. If one of these reasons be true, the others are all impertinent and inconclusive. If it be true that the universal goodness of God is inconsistent with his hating sinners for their sins, with his threatening to punish them for their sins in a future state, and with his actually punishing them for ever, then he must make them all eternally happy; without any regard to the atonement of Christ, without any regard to their universal goodness, and without any regard to their suffering in the present life. The representation which Universalists give of the universal goodness of God, and the manner in which they reason from it, show that they all build their whole scheme upon it. For according to their reasonings from divine goodness, it must make all intelligent creatures for ever happy, whether they are holy or unholy, guilty or innocent. What occasion then was there for the atonement of Christ, in order to save any of mankind from a punishment which his universal goodness would not permit him to inflict? According to their idea of the universal goodness of God, it is absurd to talk about either the need, or the benefit of Christ's atonement; for there was no need of it, and it does no good. It does not save men from future and eternal punishment, nor from temporal death, nor from temporal evils and calamities. They have but one strong reason, in their own view, in favor of universal salvation, and that is, the universal goodness of God. Take this away from them, and they have not another reason left them, of the weight of a straw. Ask them whether they build their doctrine upon the universal goodness of God, or upon the universal atonement of Christ, or upon the universal offers of the gospel, or upon the universal goodness of human nature, or upon the punishments which God brings upon men in the present life; and they are silent, and durst not answer distinctly. They are capable of seeing that these strong reasons clash, contradict, and destroy each other. It is the fate of error to run crooked. False principles are as inconsistent with one another, as with truth. And when passages of scripture are explained upon false principles, they are made to clash, to contradict, and destroy the force of each other. It is not for the want of pains, nor talents, that Universalists cannot make their strong reasons unite and harmonize in the support of their doctrine. The truth is, all their strong reasons are false, and being false, cannot be made to appear

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consistent by any subtile reasonings, nor by any false glosses upon any particular passages of scripture. So that the plain and palpable inconsistency of the scheme of universal salvation, is a plain demonstration of its falsehood.

4. If Universalism be founded upon the false and inconsistent principles that have been mentioned, then it leads to the denial of all the fundamental principles and doctrines of the gospel. Accordingly we find that Universalists do deny the doctrine of personal election, the doctrine of regeneration, the doctrine of conditions of salvation, and the doctrine of the final separation of the righteous from the wicked, at the general judgment. These are certainly the cardinal doctrines of the gospel; and when these are denied, who can see that there is any truth or importance in the gospel? Men are as certain of future and eternal happiness without it as with it. Though Universalists will not be pleased to be called deists, yet they are deists to all intents and purposes; and their doctrine leads directly to deism, and the preaching of it makes more deists than Universalists, among their more discerning hearers. Their error is a great and essential error, because it tends to prevent men from performing the conditions upon which the salvation of their souls is absolutely suspended. It assures them that they need not repent nor believe in Christ, nor exercise one holy or gracious affection, in order to escape the wrath to come, and enjoy everlasting life. They cannot fail of eternal happiness, let them say, or feel, or act as they will. Can there be a more licentious and dangerous doctrine than this? I know they flatly deny this tendency. But their denial evinces their inconsistency, absurdity and delusion.

5. It appears from what has been said, that those who preach the false and dangerous doctrine of universal salvation, are extremely criminal. Their criminality is very great, whether they do, or do not know, that their doctrine is false. If they do not know that their doctrine is false, it is because they are voluntarily ignorant. If they did but impartially attend to the dictates of reason and scripture, they would know that their doctrine is false. But if they do know that their doctrine is false, then they are ten fold more criminal in propagating it, and leading precious and immortal souls to endless perdition. They are severely condemned in scripture, as strengthening the hands of the wicked, and making sad the hearts of the righteous. They are represented as under strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they might be damned. But where is the great criminality of preaching this doctrine, if it did not expose them to any temporal, or eternal punishment? And why should such false teachers be ranked among the most vile and guilty characters described and condemned in the Bible? Or

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why should the prophets, and Christ, and apostles, have been so bitterly and mortally opposed for preaching this doctrine; as the Universalists assert that they did preach it? I never heard them answer this question, either in their conversation, or preaching, or publications; and I have read the writings of their most celebrated laymen and clergymen. The question must be perplexing and unanswerable, and, among other things, prove their doctrines to be false and dangerous.

6. If Universalists are highly criminal for teaching the false and dangerous doctrine of universal salvation, then it is unwise and criminal for any to go and hear them spread their fatal errors and corruptions. The wisest of men gives this wise and important caution against hearing false and corrupting teachers: "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." It is very wrong for any to gratify an itching ear and vain curiosity, at the risk of fatal deception. And though some may imagine that they are out of the reach of danger by hearing the sophistry of seducers, yet their example may lead others to hear and believe a lie to their eternal ruin. There is in every human heart a prepossession and bias towards error, and the most fatal error. It is unwise for any to trust in their own hearts, which are deceitful above all things; and presume upon their knowledge and integrity to discover and reject errors plausibly represented, and in their own nature agreeable to the depravity of the heart.

7. This subject shows the importance of understanding, and being firmly established in the first principles of the oracles of God. Detached passages of scripture can be of but little service in contending with Universalists, or any other heretics, without the knowledge of first principles, according to which all passages are to be explained. The knowledge of the first principles of all religion, will enable any persons to discover, to reject, and to refute all heretics. Nothing but sound principles are sufficient to refute unsound and false principles. It was the knowledge of the first principles of the gospel, that armed the apostles against all the errors, delusion and sophistry of Jews and Greeks, and enabled them to pull down the strong holds of the arch deceiver, and all his deluded followers. And all who enjoy the gospel, need the same impregnable armor of the first and fundamental principles of religious truth. We ought to think, while we read the Bible; and compare all its declarations, promises, and threatenings, with some true and infallible principle. Those who neglect to take this course, will always be liable to be carried away with every wind of doctrine, to make shipwreck of their faith, and to be drowned in perdition.

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SERMON LXXXIV.

REFLECTIONS OF SINNERS IN HELL.

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. — Luke, xvi. 25.

Since all men must soon exchange their present probationary state for another that is future, fixed and eternal, it deeply concerns them frequently to carry their thoughts into that invisible world, where they know they must take up their everlasting residence. Christ, therefore, who came into the world to prepare men for their future and final destination, said more about what is to be enjoyed and what is to be suffered, in a future state, than any of the inspired teachers sent before him. Though he often preached and discoursed about future happiness and misery, yet he never gave such a clear, visible and affecting representation of the deplorable condition of the damned, as he gives in the parable that contains the text. By this parable, he leads us to look into the world of spirits, to see a poor, miserable, hopeless creature, and hear him describe his views, his feelings and forlorn condition, in his own language. Hear the parable, though you have often heard and read it before. "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crums which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes,

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being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." Though this parable suggests a great many things of solemn importance, yet that which I would take particular notice of in the present discourse, is this:

That those who abuse their present probationary state and are finally damned, will have most bitter and tormenting reflections.

This is a serious subject indeed. It fills the mind with terror. But it becomes every one who is a probationer for a happy, or miserable eternity, to contemplate it before it is too late. Unbar your mind and give it leave to take a clear and affecting view of that gulf over which it hangs, into which it may fall, and from which it is of infinite importance to escape. The damned will have most bitter and tormenting reflections. This may be illustrated, by showing, in the first place, that they will have reflections; and, in the second place, by taking a particular view of their reflections.

I. We have reason to believe that the damned will have reflections. It is true, the miseries which men feel in this life are sometimes so great, as almost to prevent any regular and consistent thoughts. The mind is overwhelmed with such keen sensations of pain in body and mind, as leave but little room for the exercise of any of the rational powers and faculties. But though the damned may suffer severer pains and torments than can be endured in the present state, yet God can give them strength to endure all that he sees fit to inflict upon them, and make them capable of reflecting upon what is past and of anticipating what is future. For,

1. Their natural powers and faculties will not only be continued, but vastly strengthened and enlarged. The fallen angels, we know, retain all their intellectual powers, which they have undoubtedly vastly improved, by all they have seen and heard and thought, while passing through various and important scenes, in the course of nearly six thousand years. And it is reasonable to suppose, that the spirits of wicked men made miserable, will retain all their mental faculties and find them greatly invigorated by passing out of time into eternity. And of course, they will be able to think, to reflect and to anticipate incessantly and intensely.

2. They will not meet with the same obstructions to mental

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exercises, that they meet with here in their present state of probation. Here their cares, their troubles, their employments and various amusements, dissipate their thoughts and obstruct reflection. But there such objects will be entirely removed from their reach and pursuit. The prison of hell is a place of confinement, but not of employment. Those who are confined there, will have nothing to do but to think, through interminable ages. Had men no employments, nor diversions to pursue, and had their bodies no occasion for sleep and repose, they would find much time in this short life for thinking about, reflecting upon, and anticipating ten thousand different objects and subjects. The damned rest not day nor night. Their eyes are never closed. Their minds are always awake. Contemplation on things past, present and future is their sole and perpetual employment. Besides,

3. God will continually exhibit before their view such things as will excite the most painful reflections and anticipations. He will set their sins in order before them, in their nature, magnitude, and peculiar aggravations, so that they cannot obliterate them from their minds. He will exhibit all his great, amiable and terrible attributes of power, holiness, justice and sovereignty before them, and give them a constant and realizing sense of his awful presence and displeasure. He will give them clear and extensive views of the works of creation, providence and redemption; and of the happiness and misery that exist in every part of the universe, which will keep their minds in the most painful reflections and anticipations, in spite of their utmost exertions to banish them from their thoughts. He will give them no rest and no hope. Let us now,

II. Take a serious view of their bitter reflections in the regions of despair.

1. They will realize what they are. Here they are told that they are rational and immortal creatures. But the truth of their immortal existence makes very little impression on their minds. It gives them neither much pleasure, nor much pain. Their powers of reason, conscience and memory they lightly esteem, and are ready to bury them in a napkin, and neglect to use them for the purposes for which they were given. It gives them no pleasure to think they are to survive the grave, to be spectators of the whole intelligent universe at the great day, to know all the transactions of God, of Christ and of holy and unholy beings; and in consequence of this knowledge, to be perfectly holy and happy, or perfectly sinful and miserable for ever. But as soon as they exchange time for eternity, they will no longer view their rational powers and faculties and immortal existence in such a low and despicable light, as they do here;

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but find that they are creatures of vast importance to themselves, and that their rational and immortal powers were of immense value to them, if they had rightly improved them; but by abusing them, they are become sources of unspeakable misery. It seems that Dives was grossly ignorant of himself, while he thought that he had nothing to do, but to feed and clothe his body; but as soon as he lifted up his eyes in torment, he found that he had a rational and immortal soul, which was infinitely more valuable than his body, which he had left behind to corrupt and perish in the grave. And all gospel sinners, who shall meet his awful doom, will know, to their sorrow, that they are what they were told they were, rational and immortal beings, who can never cease to exist, nor to suffer.

2. They will realize where they are. Though they had often read and heard of hell, yet they would not believe it to be such a dismal place as the Bible and ministers represented. But as soon as they lift up their eyes in torment, they will find it to be a place of confinement, from which there is no deliverance. The keys of death and hell being in the hands of Christ, who shutteth and no man openeth, were it in the hearts of the whole creation to release them, the omnipotent hand of Christ would prevent it. Being delivered to the judge, and by the judge to the officer, and by the officer cast into prison, they can never come out thence. What a painful reflection must this be! But this is not the worst. They will reflect with whom they are confined; with the devil and his angels; with the dregs of mankind; with those who are devoid of every amiable quality, being hateful and hating one another. How must it make the heart stoop, to thing of for ever seeing and feeling the baneful influence of all the malignant passions, rising higher and higher and putting on still newer and more dreadful forms! O, says the damned spirit, Where am I? I am certainly in hell.

3. The damned will reflect whence they came to that place of torment. They will reflect upon the land of light and the precious advantages they there enjoyed, before they were confined to the regions of darkness. They will call to mind how many days and years of peace and comfort they had spent on earth. They will remember how they lived under the smiles of Providence and in the enjoyment of the bounties of Heaven. No place they were in, no scenes they passed through, no favors they enjoyed, will be forgotten, but called to remembrance with bitterness and sorrow. This Abraham suggested to Dives. "Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." The damned spirit will say to himself, "O my soul, never canst thou forget the innumerable

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privileges, favors and blessings, which a kind and merciful God bestowed upon thee, and by which thy ungrateful and impenitent heart treasured up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and righteous judgment of thine injured and abused Sovereign. O that I could forget that world, where I first received my existence and drew my breath; where I was mercifully placed as a probationer; where life and death were set before me; where I trifled away a blessed eternity and prepared myself for this world of wo! But I never can forget the good things which I once enjoyed and abused. I never can forget the infancy of my being, and the place from which I have fallen, never to rise again." These bitter reflections must fill the minds of the damned with unutterable pain and anguish.

4. They will reflect upon all that was done for them, to prevent them from falling into the pit of perdition. They will then know how much had been done for their future and eternal good, which will be a source of most painful reflections. They will remember what God did for them, in sending his Son to redeem them, in offering salvation to them, and in waiting upon them, even to long suffering, to accept his invitations of pardoning mercy. They will remember what Christ did for them in suffering and dying to open the door of mercy to them. Nor will they forget the faithful instructions and tender warnings and counsels of their pious and affectionate parents; nor the solemn instructions and exhortations of Christ's faithful ambassadors; nor the still, small, powerful voice of conscience; nor especially the Bible, that sacred, solemn, important book, which they had often read and as often slighted and contemned. They will be ready to say to themselves, "How plain was the divine character described! How clearly was Christ exhibited! How justly was our own character and conduct delineated! With what plainness and solemnity was even this place of torments set before our eyes! What more could have been done that was not done, to restrain us from evil, to reclaim us from folly, and bring us to God and heaven? We had line upon line, and precept upon precept. We were urged by considerations the best suited to impress the minds of rational and immortal creatures, to escape from the wrath to come. How often had we been called to the house of mourning! How often had we been led to the sides of the grave! How often did we sit under the joyful sound of the gospel! How time was lavished upon us! What precious seasons did we enjoy for reading, meditation and prayer! And O the Sabbath! what a weariness it was to us! How did we profane it, or neglect its services, or hypocritically perform them! But alas! notwithstanding all

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that has been done for us to prevent our ruin, we are ruined; and every effort for our good has been lost upon us, and only serves to render us more inexcusable and more miserable than we could have been, if we had not enjoyed and abused such great and undeserved mercies!"

5. They will realize that they destroyed themselves, which will be a source of bitter and perpetual reflections. They will be conscious to themselves that they chose the path of ruin; that they hated the light exhibited before them; that they resisted the strivings of the Spirit; that they loved vanities, and after them they would go; that they would not examine their spiritual state, nor see the plague of their own hearts; that they put far away the evil day, and would not consider their latter end, but counteracted all the means used to save them. Their conscience will tell them that they cannot cast the blame of their destruction on God, nor on Christ, nor on the Holy Spirit, nor on saints, nor on sinners, nor on the great deceiver. They will be conscious that nothing could have destroyed them, without their own choice and consent. They will find that they were bound merely by the cords of their own iniquities. They will be convinced that neither the native depravity of their own hearts, nor all the sins of their lives could have destroyed them, if they had not remained impenitent, and continued to reject the counsel of God against themselves. They will know that the chief of sinners were saved by returning to God through faith and repentance, and that they might have been saved upon the same gracious and condescending terms. They will stand guilty and condemned, not only by God, but by the verdict of their own consciences. They will be constrained to say, "This is our condemnation, that light came into the world, but we loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil." Therefore while their whole souls are wrung with the keenest tortures, they will utter these mournful accents, "How have we hated instruction, and our hearts despised reproofs; and have not obeyed the voice of our teachers, nor inclined our ears to those who instructed us! Had we been wise, we should have been wise for ourselves; but since we foolishly scorned, we alone must bear it."

6. They will reflect upon what they had done, not only to destroy themselves, but others. Whether they will retain their natural affections or not, they will doubtless deeply regret that they were instrumental in destroying the souls of men. The rich man in hell is represented as deprecating the torments of others, and especially of his own relatives, whom, while living, his vicious life had corrupted. He could not bear the thought that his brothers should share his fate. Many of the damned

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will be chargeable with the guilt of corrupting and destroying precious and immortal souls, which must give them bitter reflections. How can unfaithful parents, unfaithful ministers and ringleaders in vice, bear to meet those whom they have been instrumental in leading in the broad road to destruction? Such ruined creatures must be perpetual objects of their dread, and subject them to the insupportable pain of self reproach and self condemnation. The miseries and reproaches of those whom they have ruined, will add an awful emphasis to their own torments, which will last as long as they can see, or hear, or remember.

7. They will reflect upon what good they might have done, while they lived in the world. They will remember what a price was put into their hands to get and diffuse wisdom, to restrain folly and vice, and to promote holiness and happiness. It will give them extreme pain to recollect what talents they buried, or perverted, and what numerous opportunities of doing good they neglected. How will they feel, when they reflect what a blessing they might have been to all around them, by a life of virtue, piety and usefulness; but that instead of being a blessing, they were a curse to the world, and that instead of having the blessing of many come upon them, the curses of many will justly fall upon them and wound their feelings for ever. Every talent they buried, every opportunity of doing good they neglected, and all the good they might have done, will conspire to increase their guilt and sink them in misery.

8. It will pain them to think how they once despised and reproached godliness, and all who lived holy and godly lives. They said it was a vain thing to serve the Lord; and there was no profit in keeping his ordinances and walking mournfully before him. They esteemed and applauded the workers of iniquity as the wisest and happiest men in the world. But they now see and feel that the way which once seemed right to them, was the way of death; and that those whom they once esteemed fools, were the only wise men on earth. They will be for ever ashamed and confounded that they despised the wisdom of the just, and applauded the folly of the unjust. The lives of their pious parents, friends and acquaintance will never recur to their minds, without leaving a sting behind. They can never forgive themselves, that they were so unwise and wicked, as to love those whom they ought to have hated, and hated those whom they ought to have loved.

9. Their clear view of the happiness of heaven will be a source of tormenting reflections. They are represented as being punished in the view of heaven. The apostle John says, "They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out

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without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." And Christ says of Dives, "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." And all the damned will have the same view of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of millions more, living under the smiles of God, united in love, employed in praise and animated with the joyful prospect of rising in glory and blessedness to all eternity. This amazing contrast between the state of the blessed and their own wretched and forlorn condition, will be for ever exhibited before their eyes, and constrain them to reflect, with the most painful sensibility, what they might have been. The gate of heaven was opened to them as well as to others, but they refused to enter in. They might have drunk of those rivers of pleasure which flow at God's right hand; but now they have not a drop of water to cool their tongues. Neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor one of the inhabitants of heaven, will be either able, or disposed to pity or relieve them. When they turn their eyes to heaven, they can only gaze, lament and despair.

Finally, They will reflect not only upon what they have been, and might have been, but upon what they are, and always will be. They will reflect that being filthy, they shall be filthy still; that being unholy, they shall be unholy still; and that being miserable, they shall be miserable still. They will reflect that God, and Christ, and the Holy Ghost, and angels, and saints, will for ever hate them; and that they will for ever hate one another. They will reflect, that as long as heaven resounds with joy, hell will resound with sorrow. This will constrain them to say, O eternity, eternity, eternity! Who can dwell with devouring fire? who can dwell with everlasting burnings?

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If the state of the damned has been properly described, then it is of great importance that ministers should preach plainly upon the subject, and if possible, make their hearers realize the danger of going to hell. There are many, at this day, who profess to doubt whether there be any such being as the devil, or any such place as hell. And there are not a few others who would not have ministers use the name devil, if there be such a subtile adversary, nor the word hell, if there be such a place of torment. They wish preachers would be so complaisant as not to wound their feelings and disturb their peace by exhibiting such disagreeable scenes and objects. That they are sincere in these desires, there can be no manner of doubt. But it may be

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justly doubted, whether the ministers of Christ ought to condescend to gratify their unreasonable and dangerous desires. Christ preached much about the devil and hell. He called the great deceiver by his proper name; and used the proper word to designate the place of the damned. He said more about the person, the character, and the malignant designs of the devil, and more about the miseries of the damned, than any other teacher sent from God. And why should not his ministers imitate his example, and preach plainly upon the same subjects upon which he preached plainly? Yea, rather, why should they not preach as he commands them to preach? His command is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." He scrupled not to say, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." And he put this plain and pointed question to the impenitent: "Ye serpents! ye generation of vipers! how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" He also gave this solemn warning to his followers: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." And is it strange that he, who came to save the souls of men, should preach so plainly and pungently upon this most solemn and interesting subject? And can they, who watch for souls as those who must give an account, and who view sinners in the utmost danger of being cast into hell fire and suffering the damnation of hell, neglect to warn them of their danger in the very language of Christ, without being guilty of the blood of souls?

2. If the miseries of the damned be such as have been described, then it deeply concerns sinners to take heed how they hear the gospel. It is the gospel only, that has brought life and immortality to light, and revealed all that we know, or can know, concerning the invisible scenes and objects of the invisible world. The heathen have conjectured that there is some place beyond this world, where some departed spirits are happy, and that there is some place beyond this world, where some

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departed spirits are miserable; but they know nothing about such a place as the gospel represents heaven to be, and nothing about such a place as the gospel represents hell to be. Even Cicero, the wisest and most learned of the heathen moralists, was doubtful whether the soul were immortal, or had any existence beyond the grave. But the gospel gives us infallible evidence that the souls of men are immortal, and shall enjoy everlasting happiness, or suffer everlasting misery, after they leave this mortal state. The gospel clearly describes the place, the business and the blessedness of heaven; and the place and bitter reflections of the damned. The gospel reveals the method which God has devised to save sinners from the wrath to come, and to raise them to the world of glory and blessedness. The gospel, therefore, is the only medium through which sinners can possibly be saved. If they hear, understand and cordially embrace it, they shall have everlasting life; but if they refuse to hear, understand and cordially embrace the terms of salvation, they must suffer the damnation of hell. These are the most important truths and the most weighty motives, that can be exhibited before the minds of sinners, to awaken, convince and convert them. So Abraham thought; for when Dives entreated him to send Lazarus to warn his brethren of the danger of their coming to that place of torment, where he was confined, he said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." If men believe the gospel, they must be saved; but if they disbelieve and reject it, they must be damned. It is a solemn thing to hear the gospel, which must infallibly be a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death, to every one that hears it.

3. If the miseries of the damned be such as have been described, then we see why the scripture represents this world as so dangerous to sinners. The Bible is full of the most solemn warnings and admonitions to sinners to guard against the love of the world and the things of the world. Christ preached a great deal against the love of the world. He declared that no man could embrace the gospel and become his sincere follower, unless he denied himself, took up his cross, and renounced a supreme attachment to the world. He preached this doctrine so plainly to the amiable young man, that it destroyed all his hopes, and sent him away sorrowful. He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." And he spake the parable of Dives and Lazarus on purpose to warn sinners

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against the love of the world. He represents the rich man as clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day; plainly intimating that it was owing to his undue attachment to the world, and the enjoyments of the world, that he lived and died impenitently, and plunged himself into the bottomless pit of destruction. And he spake another parable, of a more laborious and industrious man, who destroyed himself, not by luxury or intemperance, or any thing that is called vicious, but by the supreme love of the world. But why is the love of the world represented so dangerous and destructive to the souls of men? The plain reason is, that the world and all the things of the world, directly and powerfully tend to dissipate the thoughts of men; and so to prevent all serious reflections upon God, and upon every thing serious, important and eternal. An habitual attention to this world excludes an habitual attention to another world; an habitual love to this world excludes an habitual love to another world; and worldly mindedness excludes heavenly mindedness. While the scenes and objects of this world engross the attention and affections of men, they are always stupid and regardless of the happiness of heaven, and the torments of hell. Why are young men so generally careless and stupid about the salvation of their souls? The cause is visible. They are all attention and zeal in pursuing the vanities and amusements of the world. Why are those on the stage of action, and in the meridian of life, so stupid and regardless of future happiness and misery? It is because the more serious business and concerns of this life shut out the thoughts of a future and eternal life. Men are formed for thinking, reflecting and anticipating; and they cannot help employing their thoughts about either temporal, or eternal things. And if it were not for thinking about, and loving the world, they would think about, and love God and divine things. The world would do men no harm, if they would only give it its proper place in their thoughts and in their hearts. But it is of the most ensnaring nature, and has ruined the souls of millions among the poor as well as the rich; among the learned as well as the unlearned; among the industrious as well as the idle; among the moral as well as the immoral; and among the old as well as the young. The world would destroy all men who live in it, if it were not for the sovereign grace of God, in controlling the views and renewing the hearts of some. The apostle's admonition therefore deserves the most serious regard. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." But Christ's question is still more solemn and impressive. "What shall it

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profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

4. If the miseries of the damned arise from bitter reflections, then all sinners, in their present state, are fit for destruction. They have just such views, and feelings, and reflections in kind, as the damned have. They hate to be what they are, rational, immortal and accountable creatures. They hate to be where they are, in a state of probation, where life and death, eternal happiness and eternal misery, heaven and hell, are so often exhibited before them. They hate to reflect upon what God is and what they are; or upon what others have done to save them; or upon what they have done to destroy themselves; or upon the state of the blessed in heaven; or upon the state of the miserable in hell; or upon what they may be to all eternity. They have the same love to sin and hatred to holiness, that the prisoners in despair have. They have the same enmity to God, to Christ, to good men, and to one another, that the great adversary and all his subjects have. Christ has told them, that they are of their father, the devil. And they need no change of heart, to fit them to be his companions in sin and misery for ever. Their own weight of guilt would sink them down to the regions of darkness and despair, if the forbearing mercy of God did not prevent it. But yet they think and say, that they are not totally depraved; that they do not deserve endless torments, nor are in danger of being cast into hell; that they are whole, and need not a physician; that their character and state are misrepresented; and that they have a right to trust in their goodness. They justify themselves, and condemn God and his law, and despise the thought of being in danger of hell fire, which they think is too often mentioned. They say to themselves, that they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Such views and feelings, if continued in, must ripen them fast for destruction. They are in the situation of one who was cherishing the vain hope of long prosperity, but whose soul was suddenly called into eternity.

5. If the miseries of the damned, and the character of sinners, be such as have been described, then there is reason to fear that some sinners are very near to the pit of perdition. They are in the broad road which has led many such persons as they are to the place where there is no light, and no hope. The symptoms of eternal death are upon them, though they know it not. They have reason to fear that God will cut them down, or say, Let them alone. To such Christ said, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damna-

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tion of hell?" It is God's usual method to send the spirit of slumber upon sinners, before he executes the sentence of eternal death. And has not the spirit of slumber been long visible among many sinners here? And does not this forebode that the time may be near, when they will awake and lift up their eyes in torments? Preachers did not make these marks of danger, but God has made them in his word. Be entreated to read his word, and compare your characters and conduct with this. And if you do not find yourselves condemned by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and his apostles, you need not fear what preachers say. But if you find yourselves condemned by Christ himself, "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

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SERMON LXXXV.

CONSTANT PREPARATIONS MAKING FOR THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

THE Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. 2 PETER, iii. 9.

WE should naturally suppose that God would early reveal to mankind the day of judgment, in which they are all so deeply interested. Accordingly, we find that God inspired Enoch, the seventh from Adam, to foretell this great and solemn event in a plain and striking manner. "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute *judgment* upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." To this and other predictions of the last great day, the apostle refers christians, in the context, where he says, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, that ye may be mindful of the words spoken before by the holy prophets." After this intimation that the day of judgment had been long foretold, he proceeds himself to predict, how stupid and profane sinners in time to come would feel and think and speak, in respect to this solemn subject. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth, standing out of the water and in the

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water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God is not slack in fulfilling his promise to judge the world, in the sense of these objectors. For he neither alters his purpose, nor remits his operations, but constantly employs the whole creation in preparing things for the day of judgment. But his plan is so great and extensive, that a thousand years bears no more proportion to the time necessary to accomplish it, than one day bears to the time necessary to accomplish any human design. Though he moves all the wheels of nature as fast as they can be moved, yet ages must roll away before he can finish his great work, and prepare all intelligent creatures for the retributions of eternity. The whole course of providence, instead of weakening, serves to confirm the apostle's reasoning against the criminal and dangerous infidelity of scoffers, and plainly teaches us this solemn and important truth:

That God is preparing all things, as fast as possible, for the day of judgment.

We live in the last days, in which scoffers have actually come, who not only call in question the inspiration of the scriptures, but the immortality of the soul and a future day of retribution. If there be indeed such a solemn day approaching, it is much to be desired that this truth should be set in so clear and strong a light, as to carry irresistible conviction to every mind. And I cannot but hope the following considerations will convince the understanding and conscience of every person, that God is preparing all things, as fast as possible, for the day of judgment.

1. God has but one supreme end in all his works. This end he proposed before the foundation of the world. To this end he has had an eye, in every step he has taken in creation, providence and redemption. And this end is to be completely unfolded and accomplished at the day of judgment. All things tend to that day, as to their centre and final issue. Then all intelligent and accountable creatures will be prepared for, and fixed in that state for which they were originally and eternally intended. All the subordinate designs of the Deity stand related to, and connected with his supreme ultimate design, which he can never relinquish, nor be slack to accomplish. The reason why

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men are ever slack in pursuing their ultimate design is, because they either give it up, or make it subordinate to some other ultimate design. They often alter their minds in respect to their ultimate end, and the means to accomplish it; which often retards, and sometimes prevents their finally obtaining their supreme object. But God never alters his mind in respect to his ultimate purpose, and the means to attain it. There is no new or superior object in the universe to divert his attention, or excite his exertions. If he pursues any thing he must pursue his original ultimate design, and carry it forward as fast as possible. He cannot be slack as men are, through weakness, despondency, or mutability of purpose. He cannot, for a moment, let his great work stand still, or go backward, but is morally obliged to carry it on, with as much constancy and rapidity as the nature of his supreme purpose will admit. There is just as much reason to believe that he will prepare all things as fast as possible for the day of judgment, as there is to believe that he had any supreme or ultimate end in creation.

2. The heart of God is wholly set upon the great design to be accomplished at the great day. He formed this design from eternity, and in preference to all other possible designs. His heart, to speak with reverence, is bound up in it, and all his felicity flows from it. He has no other source of happiness than the consummation of his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Jesus Christ, and which will be consummated at the last day. The Lord of hosts is far more zealous to attain the object of his supreme affection, than any of mankind ever were to attain the objects of their highest wishes. His supreme affection as far surpasses the supreme affection of his most exalted creatures, as his natural perfections surpass their natural abilities. He must, therefore, prepare all things as fast as possible, for the attainment of the object of his supreme and infinitely ardent affection. He must cause the immensely numerous events of providence to follow one another, without the least intermission, or interruption, until they finally usher in the judgment of the great day.

3. God is able to prepare all things for this most important and desirable event, without the least delay. He is able to pursue his great design, with perfect ease and constancy. He can work, and none can let it. Men often meet with difficulties and obstacles which they cannot surmount, and which retard, or prevent the accomplishment of their designs as soon as they intended and desired. Or if they meet with no external obstructions, their exertions are laborious and wearisome, and require them to take time to recruit their exhausted strength. But the Almighty is liable to no such impediments or relaxa-

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tions. He can do every thing with perfect facility. His power consists altogether in his will. Whatever he wills should exist, exists instantaneously. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." He commanded, and all things existed and stood fast. And by the same word of his power, or exercise of his will, he constantly preserves and governs all his creatures and all his works. His omnipotent arm never becomes weak or weary, by the most incessant and powerful exertions in upholding the weight, and controlling the affairs of the whole universe. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary?" We cannot conceive of any reason or cause, why the omnipotent Deity should not pursue his ultimate design as fast as possible, and accomplish it as soon as possible. Hence we are constrained to believe that he is operating in every part of the universe, as fast as possible, to prepare all his intelligent creatures for their great and last account.

4. There is no more reason to think that God will be slack, in fulfilling his promise of coming to judgment, than to suppose that he has been slack in fulfilling other promises of far less importance. He promised to destroy the old world; but he was an hundred and twenty years in preparing things for that awful catastrophe. He promised to give Abraham the land of Canaan; but he was four hundred years in preparing his seed and the seven devoted nations for that interesting event. He promised that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; but he was four thousand years in preparing the way for the coming and death of the promised Messiah. Though God was long, yet he was not slack in fulfilling these promises. He undoubtedly prepared things as fast as possible, for the accomplishment of them. And there is precisely the same ground to believe that, though God has employed several ages past, and may employ several ages to come, in preparing the way for fulfilling his promise concerning the great day, yet he will prepare all things for it as fast as possible. The steady succession of day and night, summer and winter, and the rapid revolutions and changes in the natural and moral world, afford a constant and increasing evidence that God is pursuing his ultimate end in creation, and preparing all things as fast as possible for the great concluding scene. To confirm this, and all the preceding observations, I may add,

5. That God has all means, instruments, and secondary causes in his hand, to accomplish his purpose and promise of coming to judge the world in righteousness. As he has made all things for himself, and fitted them for his use, so he con-

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stantly employs all things in his service. He makes use of every creature and of every object which he has brought into existence, as a voluntary or involuntary instrument of preparing the way for the final settlement of all the concerns of all moral beings.

We know that he directs all the motions and changes in the material creation, in reference to his supreme and ultimate design. Inspiration tells us that "while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." The sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the ocean, and all the elements, are so many instruments, which he can and will continually employ in his service to the end of time. And it is easy to conceive, from the use he has made of those material objects heretofore, what important events he may bring about, and what important purposes he may answer by their instrumentality in time to come. By his common providence, without any special or miraculous interpositions, he may cause fire and hail, snow and vapors, gentle showers, stormy winds, and rolling billows, to fulfil his word, and prepare the way for the closing scene of time.

All the animal species, as well as inanimate objects, are under his constant and supreme direction; and we may be assured that he will employ them as instruments of carrying forward his ultimate design to the end of the world. He made them to serve his purposes in this world only, and when the present material system is dissolved, they will cease to exist. But till that period arrives he will use them as the rod of his wrath, or the ministers of his love. He employed frogs, and flies, and serpents, and the meanest insects, to prepare the king and kingdom of Egypt for ruin. He employed the ravens to feed Elijah, and the fish to supply Peter, and the colt to serve Christ. God is still the owner of all the fowls of the mountains, of all the wild beasts of the field, and of all the cattle upon a thousand hills, and has an absolute right to dispose of them to serve the purposes of his providence. Nor can there be the least ground to doubt whether he will employ the whole animal creation, to prepare the way for the accomplishment of his supreme and ultimate end in all his works.

And we ought to consider farthermore, that God continually employs all intelligent creatures, as the free and voluntary instruments of carrying into execution his original and supreme purpose in the creation of the universe. He made use of Satan to bring about the fall of man and the death of Christ. He employs evil spirits to prepare the wicked for the day of evil. And he employs the holy angels to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation. He also employs rulers and subjects,

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ministers and people, parents and children, masters and servants, and every son and daughter of Adam, to prepare one another for their future and final state. Such numerous and various means, instruments, and secondary causes God is continually employing, to prepare things for the day of judgment. And now can there be any just ground to imagine that he is slack concerning his promise, or that he will never fulfil it? Did not Noah give sufficient evidence to the ungodly world of their approaching destruction, by the men and means which he employed, for an hundred and twenty years, in preparing the ark for the safety of himself and family? Did not Solomon give abundant evidence that he would finish the temple, while he employed so many thousand hands, year after year, in preparing materials for that large, elegant, and superb structure? But do not the vastly greater preparations which God is constantly making for the day of judgment, give us far more clear, striking, and infallible evidence that he will bring about that unspeakably awful and joyful event as soon as possible?

This subject now suggests some important things, which call for our most serious attention.

1. The great preparations which God is making for the last day, give us just ground to expect that when it comes, it will be a most solemn and important event. If it should bear a proper proportion, in point of solemnity and importance, to the time and means employed in preparing for it, it will unspeakably surpass, in solemnity and importance, all other scenes which have ever taken place, or ever will take place, in time or eternity. Accordingly the apostle, with peculiar propriety and emphasis, calls it *the great day.* The circumstances, the business, and the consequences of it, will all unite to render it solemn and interesting beyond the present conception of men and angels. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth shall be burned up. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth. Then shall the Son of Man sit upon the throne of his glory, with all the holy angels with him, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the books, which contain the records of time and eternity will be opened. Then every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil, will be brought into judgment. Then whatever had been covered,

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shall be revealed; and whatever had been hidden shall be made known. Then the hidden things of darkness, and the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. The sins of the righteous, as well as the sins of the wicked, shall be made manifest; and whatever had been done in heaven, in earth, and in hell, shall be exhibited and published before the whole universe. This solemn process will be closed by the sentence of the supreme Judge, who will say unto them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But he will say unto them on the left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." While these shall go away into everlasting punishment, the righteous shall enter into life eternal. Such will be the final separation between holy and unholy angels; between holy and unholy men; between holy and unholy parents; between holy and unholy children; between holy and unholy friends; which must excite the highest joys and sorrows, and the keenest sensibilities, in the hearts of the happy and the miserable, that can be conceived.

2. The great preparations which God is making for the day of judgment plainly intimate that the decisions of that day will be conclusive and irreversible. Origen supposed that there will be an everlasting series of changes and revolutions in the characters and conditions of moral beings. And some ingenious and learned divines have since supposed that, notwithstanding the sentence of condemnation that shall be passed on the devil and all impenitent sinners at the great day, they will still be in a probationary state, and after they have suffered severely for a longer or shorter period, they will be purified, and prepared for a restoration to the favor and enjoyment of God for ever. But the preparations which God is making for the day of judgment, are a plain and visible refutation of this unreasonable and unscriptural sentiment. Why should God employ such a long space of time, and such a vast variety of means and instruments, to prepare all moral and accountable creatures for the account they are to give at the great day, if they are afterwards to have a more decisive and final trial? The reason which the apostle gives for God's taking so long a time, before he brings on the day of judgment, is that he may give sinful creatures a sufficient space for repentance, so that they may all be prepared for that great day of decision. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." This passage plainly implies that God will bring all those sinners of mankind to repentance, whom he

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intends to save, before the day of judgment. And hence we might justly conclude that if he intends to save any or all of the fallen angels, he will also bring them to repentance, before the general judgment comes. But we are expressly told that they will be reserved in chains of darkness till that day arrives, and then will be doomed with the finally impenitent of mankind, to everlasting punishment. Besides, God cannot prepare all things for the general judgment, until he has actually obtained his ultimate end in creation. Then, and not till then, he can vindicate his own character and conduct in the view of all intelligent beings; which is the principal reason why a general judgment is proper and necessary. Without calling the whole intelligent creation together, he could not convince every individual that he had treated not only him but every other creature perfectly right. But the process of the last day will fasten a conviction, upon the minds of both the friends and enemies of God, of the perfect rectitude of all his purposes and operations from the beginning to the end of time. Hence the design of the general judgment, as well as the long and vast preparations making for it, leave no ground to expect that there ever will be a review, or rehearing of the case of those who shall then be condemned to suffer the due reward of their deeds. If any one indulges this absurd and fallacious hope, let him hear the solemn admonition of Him who holds the keys of death and of hell in his hands, and who openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."

3. Since God is making use of us, as free, voluntary agents, to prepare things for the day of judgment, we ought to esteem every duty which he has enjoined upon us, as a real privilege. It is certainly our duty, when we know his ultimate design, to fall in with it and sincerely endeavor to promote it. And it is certainly a privilege to be employed in promoting any great and good design. Any benevolent person would esteem it a duty and a privilege to assist in carrying on any important work, or business, which was designed to promote the public good. The preparations which God is making for the great and last day, are designed to promote the most desirable and the most important end. And every duty which men can perform, will serve to carry forward that great and most desirable purpose. It was the duty of Noah to build an ark to preserve himself and family, and to prevent the extinction of the

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whole human race; and that duty was a privilege. It was the duty of Moses to lead the people of God out of the house of bondage to the land of promise; and that duty was a privilege. It was the duty of Solomon to build the temple for the honor of God and the good of his people; and that duty was a privilege. It is no less a duty and privilege, to be aiding and assisting, or as the scripture more properly terms it, to be workers together with God, in his preparations for the day which shall bring to a happy close his eternal purpose in all his works. It is a privilege to ministers of the gospel, to have the care and instruction of immortal souls, and to be employed as instruments of preparing them for their appearance before their supreme Judge. It is a privilege to rulers, to rule for God and to promote the interests of his spiritual kingdom. It is a privilege to parents, to be employed in training up their children for the parts they are to act on the stage of life, and for the account they are to give before the supreme tribunal. And it is a privilege to every one of us, to have the care of our own souls, and to be allowed to prepare ourselves to appear with safety and joy before the judgment seat of Christ. Every duty we perform has some influence in preparing ourselves or others for the great day of retribution; and for this reason, we ought to esteem every duty assigned us as a real privilege. It is an opportunity of promoting an infinitely important design, which will be a source of felicity to God and to all the inhabitants of heaven.

4. The constant and great preparations which God is making for the day of judgment, loudly admonish all persons of all ages and conditions, to live a holy and devout life. This is the plain and practical inference which the apostle draws from this solemn subject: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." "Wherefore, beloved brethren, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." This exhortation applies with equal force and obligation to all men, whether rich or poor, high or low, bond or free. They must all eventually meet together and stand upon a level before the judgment seat of Christ, where neither riches, nor honors, nor talents, nor any of the boasted distinctions of this world, will have the least avail to gain the approbation of their Judge. The day of grace, which they now enjoy, is the most important period of their existence. All their eternal interests are suspended upon their

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conduct in this short and uncertain life. If they repent, and believe the gospel, and live soberly and righteously and godly, in this present evil world, they may look for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. But if they abuse their time, their talents, their wealth, or their influence, in corrupting themselves and others, they will treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. These are the terms upon which they shall certainly be accepted or rejected in the great day of decision. Let none deceive themselves. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." It is the most important business of all men in this world, to prepare to meet their Judge in peace. He has committed the care of their souls to themselves, and pointed out the path they must pursue, and the duties they must practice, to secure his favor, and obtain that crown of righteousness which he has promised to all those who love his appearing. They ought to feel and act as the primitive christians did in their probationary state. "Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent" from the body, "we may be" present with the Lord, and "accepted of him." "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." Their hearts cannot endure, nor their hands be strong, in the day that God shall deal with them. They will find it to be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. When the slothful servant was condemned and cast away, there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. When the man without the wedding garment was bound hand and foot and cast into outer darkness, there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Christ has told all the finally impenitent, that there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when they shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, sit down in the kingdom of God, and they themselves shut out.

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